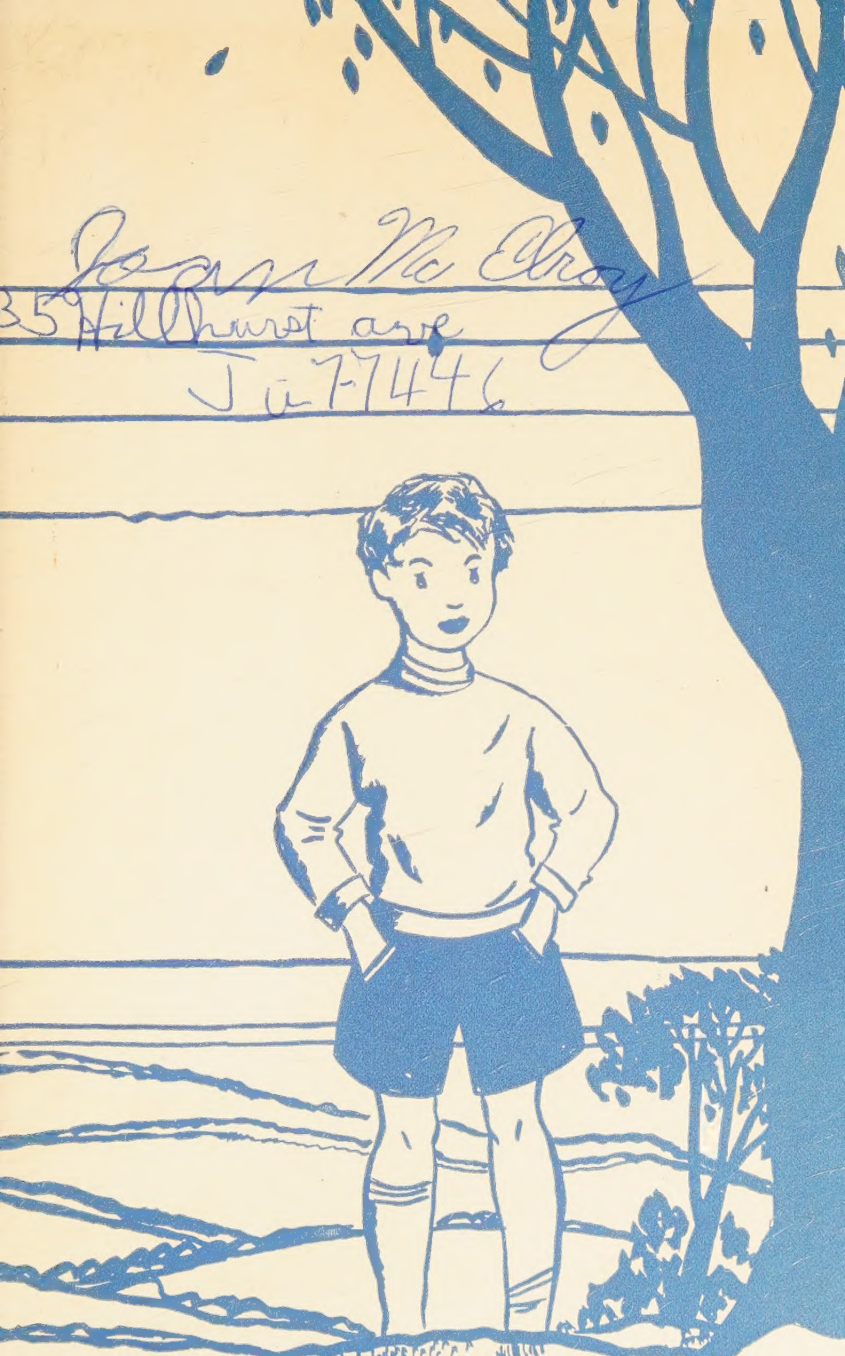
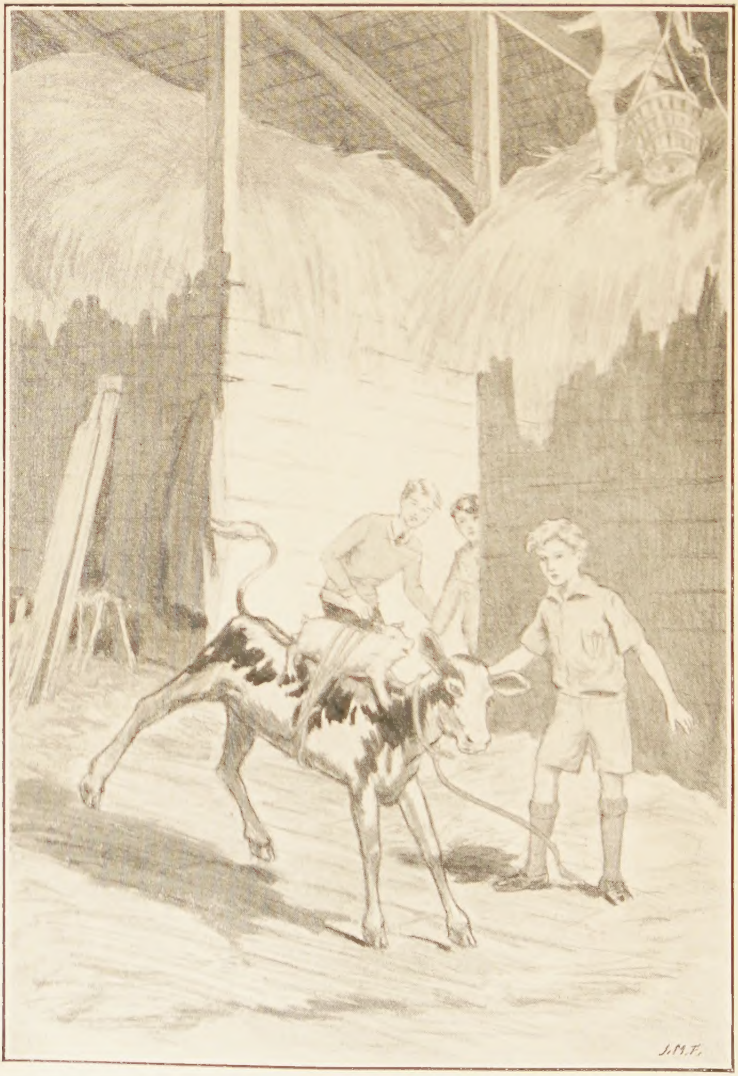
SUNNY BOY AT WILLOW FARM

RAMY ALLISON WHITE


Joan McElroy
35 Hillcrest ave
Ja-7-7446

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/sunnyboyatwillow0000unse



With a leap the calf landed in the center of the barn floor.
(Sunny Boy at Willow Farm) *(Frontispiece)*

SUNNY BOY AT WILLOW FARM

BY

RAMY ALLISON WHITE

Author of
"Sunny Boy in the Country," "Sunny Boy with the Circus," "Sunny Boy in the Snow," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN M. FOSTER

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1929
BY
BARSE & CO.

SUNNY BOY AT WILLOW FARM

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	On the Front Steps	9
II	Sunny Boy and His Daddy	23
III	That New Hose	37
IV	Good-By to Toby	50
V	Bacon's Spider	63
VI	Willow Farm	77
VII	Friends to Play With	88
VIII	Summer Fun	104
IX	Sunny Boy's Plan	114
X	The Circus	130
XI	The Sun Comes Out	144
XII	All Afloat	154
XIII	A Long Night	168
XIV	Mr. Jim Watcher	179
XV	Home Again	193

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

With a leap the calf landed in the center of the barn floor (Page 142) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

The donkey flew across the lawn 93

Down came the whole thing on top of Sunny Boy . 127

Sunny Boy finally reached the door and looked out . 161

SUNNY BOY AT WILLOW FARM

CHAPTER I

ON THE FRONT STEPS

SUNNY BOY HORTON was gluing a ship together. He sat on the front steps and Ruth Baker, who lived in the house next door, watched him.

"What's that funny place you're going to this summer?" asked Ruth, leaning over to stir the glue.

"Please don't play with the glue, Ruth," Sunny Boy begged, for the twentieth time that afternoon. "You'll upset the bottle."

"I'm not playing with it," insisted Ruth. "I'm stirring it for you, so it will be nice and smooth.

Don't you want the glue to be nice and smooth, Sunny Boy?"

"Well, the last bottle of glue I had, you tipped over and the glue ran down the cracks in the step," Sunny Boy reminded her.

Ruth put down the glue brush and rested her chin in her hand.

"What's the name of the place you're going to this summer, Sunny Boy?" she urged. "I asked you and you never told me. I think you ought to answer my questions."

Sunny Boy held two pieces of wood together with a very tight grip. He wanted to tie them, but he would have to wait till Nelson Baker, Ruth's brother, came back from taking a walk around the block with Toby. Nelson liked to take Toby—that was Sunny Boy's dog—for a walk. He said all dogs needed exercise and he could pretend that Toby was *his* dog when he went walking with him.

"I forgot to tell you," Sunny Boy apologized to Ruth. "We're going to Willow Farm and

it's on Willow River which isn't far from Willow Lake."

Ruth stared at him accusingly.

"Oh, you're just making that up!" she declared.

"No, I'm not. It's really so," answered Sunny Boy. "You ask Mother."

Round the corner came a big dog, his brown eyes dancing, his red tongue hanging out of his mouth. After him raced a boy, a little taller than Sunny Boy, with cheeks as red as apples.

"Nelson, you ought to listen to Sunny Boy!" cried Ruth. "He says he's going to Willow Farm and it's on Willow River, not far from Willow Lake. Isn't he making that up?"

Nelson sat down on the lowest step and Sunny Boy patiently lifted his glue bottle and put it on the shelf of the little table where his mother kept her fern. Toby, the dog, had a great way of wagging his tail and that tail of Toby's could sweep over bottles if it came anywhere near them.

"Willow Farm on Willow River near Willow Lake," chanted Nelson in a sing-song tone. "Who told you about it, Sunny Boy?"

"Daddy," Sunny Boy said proudly. "I guess he knows. Nelson, will you hold this for me while I wind the string around?"

Nelson took the pieces of wood and held them while Sunny Boy began to wind string over and over, because the glue would dry more quickly, you see, if something kept the parts of the ship from slipping apart as they dried.

"What are you going to do with this ship when you get it made, Sunny Boy?" asked Ruth, putting her arm around Toby, who was really too warm to enjoy being hugged.

Ruth dearly loved to ask questions and Sunny Boy didn't mind answering most of the time.

"I'm going to sail it in the river, I think," he answered now. "Tie a string to it, you know, so it can't float away. If you want one of your paper dolls to have a sail, you give me one, Ruth, and I'll let her go sailing."

Ruth shook her head decidedly.

"You might let my paper doll fall off and drown," she objected. "A paper doll will drown in just a little water. I'd be uneasy, if you took a paper doll of mine, Sunny Boy."

Ruth had heard her mother say she was "uneasy" if they were late for supper, and she thought that was a very nice word indeed.

"Well, all right. I thought maybe you'd want a paper doll to have a summer in the country," said Sunny Boy. "But if you don't, I'll have to sail my ship without any passengers."

Nelson was turning over the pieces of wood and examining them curiously.

"Where did you get the ship, Sunny Boy?" he asked. "I'd like to make one like that."

"My Aunt Bessie brought it to me," Sunny Boy explained. "She bought it in a toy store. It's all made, except gluing the pieces together. See, here's the name of the ship—the H-A-T-T-I-E."

Ruth leaned across the panting Toby to look.

"Then it's named for Harriet, isn't it?" she suggested, with interest. "Does Harriet know it?"

This was a question that really did seem rather foolish to Sunny Boy.

"Of course she knows it," he said. "I showed her the boat as soon as Aunt Bessie gave it to me. That's why Aunt Bessie bought this boat —because it was named Hattie; she knew I'd like it."

Toby stood up suddenly and shook himself. He just couldn't stand Ruth's fat little arm around his neck any longer. His bushy tail hit the box with the pieces of wood in it and down the steps they tumbled in great confusion.

"Honestly, Toby, I should think you'd know better than to do that," scolded Ruth.

"He didn't see the box," Sunny Boy explained. "It's all right, Toby—you didn't mean to knock it over, did you? I'm glad he didn't upset the glue, because we can pick up wood, but glue gets wasted."

The three children carefully picked up the bits of bright-colored wood and put them back in the box, while Toby sat on the pavement and looked up and down the block to make sure that no fierce and dangerous cats should come walking past his house.

"Here comes a wagon," said Ruth, as she sat down to get cool again, for it was a warm, summery day.

"A huckster's wagon," added Nelson.

A horse, drawing a wagon, was coming very slowly down the street. The horse was either very tired or very old, for it seemed to crawl, rather than walk. It was a dirty white color and Sunny Boy was sure that if that was his horse, the first thing he would do would be to wash it. Yes, and Harriet would help him. Harriet never would have a dirty white horse in her stable, nor would she let Sunny Boy play with one.

The wagon bulged out on either side with baskets of vegetables, and there was a red-headed

boy, with a basket of tomatoes on his shoulder, walking on the curb and keeping pace with the horse. His hair was almost as red as those tomatoes.

On the seat of the wagon sat an old man with a dirty brown beard and wearing a straw hat so far back on his head that Ruth thought every minute it would drop off. She paid more attention to the hat, watching to see it drop and wondering why it didn't, than she did to anything else. Even when the wagon creaked and groaned its way to them and stopped at the curb, all Ruth could see was that straw hat apparently hanging on the back hairs of the driver's head.

"Hello, bub!" said the red-headed boy, making an awful face at Sunny Boy.

"Hello!" Sunny Boy returned politely.

"I suppose you're the man of the house?" said the boy, pretending to kick Toby.

He only pretended, for Toby stood so very still and stared at him so coldly, the boy quickly

decided that there was no fun to be had in teasing a dog like that.

"No-o, my daddy is the man of our house," Sunny Boy explained.

"Quit your clatter, Sandy, and let me attend to business," said the old man, who was so fat it really was remarkable how he had ever climbed into the wagon seat and you'd wonder how he was ever going to manage to climb out again.

He reached over into the back of the wagon and pulled out a box of strawberries.

"Ask your mother to come out and look at these berries, young man," said the fat old man, who was evidently a farmer. "If she knows good berries, she'll want a dozen boxes from me."

Ruth and Nelson Baker simply stared, but Sunny Boy got up and went into the house. He found his mother in the kitchen getting a drink of water and Harriet finishing the ironing.

"I could can some berries if I had them tomorrow, Mrs. Horton," said Harriet, when she heard what Sunny Boy had to tell.

"I'll come out and look at them," said Sunny Boy's mother, and she followed him out to the wagon.

"Sweet ripe berries, ma'am," the old man told her, holding out the basket so she might see for herself. "Grow 'em on my own place. You can't buy better berries than these. Better take a dozen boxes and make sure of jam next winter."

Mrs. Horton looked at the lovely red berries, so clean and bright and fresh looking, and Sunny Boy's mouth watered, for he remembered the strawberry preserves Harriet had made last year.

"I'll take a dozen boxes, if they're all like these," said Mrs. Horton.

"Yes'm, they're just the same berries. I'll send the boy in with them," the old man declared.

"I'll pay him then," said Mrs. Horton, and she went back to the house.

It took the old farmer several minutes to ar-

range the twelve boxes of berries on a flat tray with a handle, and while he was doing that the red-headed Sandy amused himself by making faces at the children and by squeezing a ripe tomato in his hand till all the seeds and juice ran out on the pavement.

"You're making a mess," Ruth said to him reprovingly.

"Then you'll have something to do, cleaning it up," Sandy retorted. "I like to see a little girl make herself useful. You get a broom and some water and do a bit of scrubbing—that's what girls are for."

"Take these berries in and let's have no more of your nonsense," said the old man crossly, rapping the boy over the knuckles with the handle of the whip, as though he were angry.

Sandy put that hand into his mouth and took the basket in the other and went up the steps, into the front hall. The farmer began to sort over tomatoes, letting the spoiled ones fall into the gutter as he worked.

"I don't think he ought to do that," whispered Nelson to Sunny Boy.

"Sh! He's cross," Sunny Boy whispered back. "I'll pick them up so Harriet won't see them."

Just then the red-headed boy came out of the house and brushed past Ruth in such haste that he nearly stepped on her fingers as her hand rested on the porch floor. Sandy still carried the twelve baskets of berries, and, dear me, didn't the old man scowl when he saw them!

"She won't buy 'em!" said Sandy in a loud voice, putting the flat tray down with a thump on the seat beside the farmer.

"Won't buy them! What's the matter with her?" the old man shouted.

"She says they're not like the sample berries you showed her," said Sandy. "These are little and green and some of them are spoiled, she says. And if you want my opinion, she's right. I wish you'd try to sell your own old fakes, so I do."

The farmer leaned down from the seat, his

face red with rage. He raised his arm to strike the boy, but missed him, as Sandy drew back. Then he raised the whip and lashed the poor dirty white horse so furiously that the tired beast broke into a rickety gallop. Up the street the wagon went, rocking from side to side and leaving the three greatly surprised children and Sandy staring after it.

Nelson began to laugh and Sandy, stooping, snatched one of the rotten tomatoes from the gutter where the old man had dropped it. Sandy hurled it with all his might and it struck Sunny Boy, not Nelson. The juice ran over the sleeve and one side of his clean blouse, staining the linen sadly.

"You think you're so smart, don't you?" cried Sandy, scowling fiercely, and he picked up a second tomato.

He let this fly and Ruth dodged it just in time. It struck against a pillar of the porch and as Ruth gave a little cry, Toby growled. Perhaps he had been too surprised at first to act,

because you must remember Toby didn't know boys who threw rotten tomatoes at people. Now, however, he understood what was going on, and he lunged at the red-headed boy. Sandy looked frightened and began to run. As he ran he tried to kick and he looked so funny Sunny Boy almost laughed.

"Chase him, Nelson!" urged Ruth excitedly. "Chase him and throw things at him. Come on, I'll help you."

CHAPTER II

SUNNY BOY AND HIS DADDY

RUTH BAKER was half way down the steps before Sunny Boy could stop her. As for Nelson, he sat placidly and never moved.

"Toby will chase him a little way, Ruth," said Sunny Boy. "It's too hot to run after him. Anyway, he's too big for Nelson to fight. It's lucky that tomato didn't hit you in the face—it almost did."

"What in the world!" Mrs. Horton exclaimed, opening the screen door, "Why, Sunny Boy Horton, what happened to you? And look at the mess on our clean sidewalk!"

"That Sandy boy did it!" explained Sunny Boy excitedly. "He threw rotten tomatoes at us, Mother. He hit me, but that's all right. Only he almost hit Ruth, too."

"Rotten tomatoes!" Mrs. Horton repeated. "Why should any one throw rotten tomatoes at you children?"

"I think he was mad because the old man tried to hit him, Mrs. Horton," said Nelson. "And the old man tried to hit him because you wouldn't buy the strawberries. He drove off and left the Sandy boy, and he picked up tomatoes and threw them."

Mrs. Horton couldn't help smiling at this explanation.

"The berries were very poor and nothing like the sample he showed me," she declared. "But I'm sorry I didn't come out at once, and this would not have happened. Here comes Toby. He ought not to run about so much in warm weather—see how his tongue is hanging out."

"He chased him, Mother!" cried Sunny Boy eagerly. "Toby chased that Sandy and scared him. Toby didn't like it because he threw rotten tomatoes at us."

Toby came up and dropped on the ground

close to the steps with a great sigh. He looked warm and tired, but you could see at once that he was a satisfied dog.

"I settled that red-headed boy's hash," he seemed to say to Sunny Boy.

"You must change your blouse, Sunny Boy," directed his mother. "Come in and get freshened up before Daddy comes home; Nelson and Ruth will excuse you. I'll have to ask Harriet to come out with water and broom and clean here."

Ruth rose rather hastily and said that she and Nelson must go home. Perhaps she remembered what the red-headed boy had said about making herself useful and she may have been afraid that Mrs. Horton might ask her to use the broom and water. Anyway, she and Nelson went into their own house and Sunny Boy went into *his* house and up to his room to put on a clean blouse.

While he is changing that tomato-stained blue blouse for a white one, we'd better tell you who

he is. In case you do not know, of course. For you may know Sunny Boy Horton, who lived in Centronia with his mother and his daddy and Harriet who helped them all keep house. Sunny Boy's right name was Arthur Bradford Horton and he was named for his grandpa. But he was such a sunshiny small boy that everyone he knew called him "Sunny Boy" and many people did not know he had any other name.

One reason he was sunshiny was that he had so much to do. He had to visit his grandpa, who lived on a farm, and he had to take his mother to New York and take care of her wherever they went, and he and his daddy took her to Bermuda and out West, as well as to other places. Then, when he was at home, Sunny Boy had to help the other children learn new games, and he had to go to school, naturally, and once he lost himself and found he had joined a circus and another time he made friends with a dog—yes'm that's Toby who lived with Sunny Boy after that. Then, in the book before this one,

called "Sunny Boy in the Snow," Sunny Boy Horton had the busiest of winters making the most of the heavy snow storms that came to his city. He managed to go ice boating with other boys and they were all lost and spent the night in a cave and discovered, in the morning, that they couldn't get out because the snow had covered the entrance. But Sunny Boy, and the others too, did get out, as you know, because here's Sunny Boy Horton putting on a clean blouse and thinking about summer fun instead of what had happened to him in the winter.

"Sunny Boy! Sunny Boy!" his mother called, just as he buttoned his last button.

"Yes, Mother!" cried Sunny Boy, running to the stairs. "Here I am, Mother!"

Mrs. Horton stood in the hall, looking up at him.

"Daddy just telephoned," she said. "He wanted to know if you would like to drive out to the mill with him. He'll be here in about twenty minutes."

Sunny Boy was always ready to go with his daddy. They had the best of times together, and Sunny Boy meant to learn to run the car as soon as he was seventeen and then he would take his daddy driving and bring the car to him at his office whenever he needed it.

"I could go, couldn't I, Mother?" said Sunny Boy eagerly.

"I told him you'd be ready, dear," Mrs. Horton answered. "Come here and let me tie your tie, Sunny Boy—Harriet would say it looked lopsided."

Sunny Boy, with his tie nicely tied, went out and sat on the front steps to wait for his daddy. He had not long to wait, for the car soon drove up and stopped with two soft little "honks" of the horn. That was Sunny Boy's and his daddy's secret signal. It meant, "Hey, there!" but no one, not even Nelson Baker, knew that.

"Take Toby, Daddy," begged Sunny Boy, running out to the curb. "Take Toby. He loves to go driving, Daddy."

"Oh, Sunny Boy, I don't believe Daddy wants to take Toby. It's too warm," Mrs. Horton said.

She had heard the car and had come out, too. And there was Toby, his feet planted on the running board and his red tongue hanging out and the most pleading expression in his brown eyes.

"Well, you see, Mother," said Mr. Horton seriously, "Toby can't go away with us to Willow Farm; so don't you think, Mother, that we ought to give him a little treat? Something like a good-by party, Mother?"

Mrs. Horton laughed and kissed Sunny Boy, who was climbing into the front seat beside his daddy.

"You and Sunny Boy are absolutely the most hopeless pair I ever knew," said Sunny Boy's pretty mother, opening the door of the car so that Toby could get into the back seat. "When you are together you do nothing but giggle. Don't forget to come home to dinner promptly,

because we're going to have strawberry shortcake."

The words "strawberry shortcake," reminded Sunny Boy of the farmer who had tried to sell his mother the poor berries. As they drove away, he told Daddy Horton about what had happened.

"And Toby chased that bad boy as far as he could," finished Sunny Boy, when he had explained everything. "So he ought to have a ride, oughtn't he, Daddy?"

"He certainly has earned it," agreed Mr. Horton, and Toby, on the back seat of the car, thumped his tail because he heard his name mentioned.

"Who was this farmer, Sunny Boy?" asked Mr. Horton, stopping the car as the red light flashed out at the street corner.

"Oh-h, he was old," Sunny Boy said slowly. "He was 'most old, Daddy, and fat. I don't see how he could get out of the wagon because he was so fat. But I guess he must get out, though.

I don't know his name, but the boy had red hair and his name was Sandy."

The amber light glowed and then the green and Mr. Horton turned the corner before he spoke.

"Why, Sunny Boy, that must have been old Higgins," he said then. "We pass his place on the road to the mill. If I see the boy anywhere around I'll speak to him."

"Will you speak to old Higgins, too?" asked Sunny Boy interestedly.

Mr. Horton laughed a little at that.

Don't let Mother hear you say 'old Higgins'," he warned Sunny Boy. "She wouldn't like to hear me say it, either. He isn't much of a farmer and I'm afraid he hasn't a pleasant disposition, but Mother would expect us to call him Mr. Higgins politely."

"Yes," replied Sunny Boy, who understood at once. "Mother is always polite."

They had reached the outskirts of Centronia by this time, and the state highway, broad and

clean and white, stretched out before them. Sunny Boy loved to look ahead and see the road go up and down hill.

"I think, after all, we'll go to the mill first," decided Mr. Horton. "I can take a short cut and if I stop at the Higgins' place I may miss my man at the mill."

Sunny Boy nodded. He liked his daddy to talk to him as though he were another man. And he liked the short-cut road, because it was nothing more than a lane with tall trees on either side and when they met another car, as they did presently, they had to turn out into a little cleared space under a tree and wait for it to go past them.

"This is the mill road," said Mr. Horton, when they came out again on another white macadam road with gaily painted stands built on both sides of it.

"When we go to Willow Farm, we're going to eat at a roadside stand, Daddy," Sunny Boy said a little wistfully. "Mother promised."

"Yes, and that will be a good time to do it," agreed Mr. Horton, letting the car coast down a hill. "We couldn't buy anything to eat now, Sunny Boy, or we wouldn't have appetites for that strawberry shortcake; and think what Harriet would say to us then."

"Oh, I'm not really hungry—not yet," Sunny Boy said hastily. "I was thinking that perhaps Toby might be hungry. But I guess he can wait till we get home."

Mr. Horton said yes, he thought Toby wouldn't mind waiting, and then they came to the busy sawmill where the machinery made a noise as if all the wood in the world was being cut up then and there, that minute.

Sunny Boy got out of the car when his daddy did and stood in the doorway, watching the wheels buzz and the men rush to and fro, while his daddy went into a little office all made of glass and talked to a man at a desk. Sunny Boy would have liked to stay a long time and watch the machinery; but no one seemed to have

any time to explain things to him and Toby looked at him so wistfully through the windows of the car that Sunny Boy went back and sat on the running board and talked to him. They had not let Toby out of the car because there was a long sign over the mill door which read, "No Admittance" and Mr. Horton was sure that dogs would not be allowed to go inside the building.

"Some day I'll bring you out and show you the mill, Sunny Boy," said his daddy, coming out to the car a moment later. "Just now we can't stop. I must go to a little blacksmith shop up the road and then, if we have time, we'll stop at the Higgins' place and after that we'll have to rush home, or no one will be glad to see us."

But when they came to the little old blacksmith shop, it was closed!

The door was locked and Sunny Boy thought that was odd, for the door was so old it had wide cracks in it and some of the panes of glass were missing from the windows. If a burglar

had wanted to get into that shop, the locked door need not have hindered him.

Has he gone away?" asked Sunny Boy, staring.

"I think he's gone to visit his married daughter," Mr. Horton said, backing the car. "He's a nice old blacksmith and he works at his trade only when he feels well and strong. He promised Mother to hammer her some old-fashioned iron hinges two months ago, and I don't believe he has even started them. She asked me to stop in and see him before we go to the country and I thought to-day would be a good time."

"Well," said Sunny Boy, as they went back over the same stretch of road, "perhaps Mr. Higgins will be at home, Daddy."

"Perhaps he will," Mr. Horton replied. "We'll hope so."

They went through the short-cut road again, this time without meeting any other car. Then they rolled along for several miles on the state highway and then turned into a dirt road that

was, however, hard and smooth at that time of year.

"There's the Higgins' place," said Mr. Horton presently. "Straight ahead of us, Sunny Boy."

"It looks a little messy," Sunny Boy observed. "I don't think Harriet would like it, Daddy."

CHAPTER III

THAT NEW HOSE

DEAR me, there was no doubt about the Higgins' place being messy, Sunny Boy decided, when he and his daddy stopped before the door. Harriet would never like a farm that looked as this one did. The house was built so close to the road that there was no yard or grass at all. Chickens and rusty machinery and ducks and parts of broken wagons and dirty children and baskets and crates, were all mixed up together in a trail that streamed from the front door to the tumble-down barns.

"It looks," said Sunny Boy critically, "like the blacksmith shop."

It looked worse than the blacksmith shop, because there was more of it. There were more windows without any glass and more doors with

no paint on them. Though the children stared at the car, they did not move nor offer to come and find out what was wanted.

"Is Mr. Higgins at home?" called Mr. Horton loudly.

When he said that, a woman came to the doorway. The door was off and leaning against the side of the house and Sunny Boy wondered whether the blacksmith had promised to make hinges for it and had forgotten them.

"Who do you want to see?" called the woman, wiping her mouth on her gingham apron.

She looked warm and tired and untidy. Her hair wasn't pretty and it stood up around her face in little spikes. Her dress was torn, under her apron, and the apron itself was far dirtier than Harriet ever allowed an apron of hers to be.

"I'm looking for Mr. Higgins," Mr. Horton answered, leaning out of the car. "Does he live here?"

"He lives here, but he ain't home yet," said

the woman, while the children stared at Sunny Boy and at Toby. "He's off huckstering. Can I do anything for you?"

She came down to the car and the children came and stood beside her. She had light blue eyes and all the children had light blue eyes and they all stared and stared.

"I wanted to see him about a boy he has working for him," Mr. Horton said slowly. "A red-haired boy called Sandy."

"Oh!" said the woman, her face turning a dull red. "Well, I—I thought you were collecting a bill, or I would have told you Mr. Higgins came home about an hour ago in a towering rage. He went out again, but only down to Jackson's store. He'll be right back. He and Sandy MacFall quarreled and Tom discharged him. I never had any use for Sandy myself. He talked back too much."

Sunny Boy would have said that Sandy threw rotten tomatoes and that, he thought, was worse than "talking back." But he wasn't sure he

ought to tell about Sandy, and before he had a chance to, even if he had tried, Mr. Horton had turned the car and was going back.

"Daddy," said Sunny Boy thoughtfully.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Horton.

That meant, as Sunny Boy knew, "Go ahead, I'm listening."

"Why did Mrs. Higgins say Mr. Higgins hadn't come home when he had come home?" asked Sunny Boy.

"I think, Sunny Boy," Mr. Horton replied, "she only meant to save Mr. Higgins unpleasantness. She thought we were going to ask him for money and he may not have had any money. She didn't stop to think she was telling a fib—she merely said the first thing that came into her mind."

Sunny Boy thought about this for perhaps a minute. Then he saw a horse and wagon coming toward them and he almost jumped.

"Look, Daddy!" he cried. "That's Mr. Higgins!"

The white horse and the wagon and the fat old man—there they all were, just as Sunny Boy had seen them in front of his house that afternoon. Only the red-headed boy was missing, and Mr. Higgins was standing up and beating the poor white horse with the long whip.

"Oh-h, isn't he mean!" Sunny Boy almost shouted, it made him so angry to see a horse treated like that.

As they looked, the farmer gave a quick jerk on the reins and the horse turned sharply. Then Sunny Boy and his daddy saw that a lane opened into the road at that point—afterward Mr. Horton said he thought it must be a shorter way to reach the Higgins' farm—and the wagon spun around.

"Daddy, it broke!" cried Sunny Boy excitedly.

That wagon really seemed to fall apart! Something at the end came out and a basket of tomatoes tumbled to the ground. The old canvas on the sides ripped and potatoes and onions and strawberries fell out in showers. The

horse began to run and Mr. Higgins began to shout and the more noise he made, the more the vegetables shot out of the wagon. Then, the next minute, a wheel came off and the wagon went down with a thud. The horse stopped, but Mr. Higgins' voice didn't. Even from the road, Sunny Boy and his daddy could hear him shouting.

"Oh, my, he's mad!" cried out Sunny Boy, turning around to look over his shoulder, for Mr. Horton, perhaps remembering Harriet's shortcake, was driving straight on.

"Daddy, he's waving his arms and yelling! I guess maybe the strawberries were smashed. And the tomatoes, too! And he won't ever be able to find all the potatoes that fell out. But I should think he could mend his wagon," finished Sunny Boy. "I mended my express wagon when the wheel came off. Nelson Baker helped me."

Toby jumped up and licked Sunny Boy's face, and Sunny Boy turned around and settled him-

self comfortably—Mr. Higgins and his wagon were too far behind to be seen now.

"I think it served him right, Daddy," said Sunny Boy soberly.

"Do you?" Mr. Horton answered.

"Yes," replied Sunny Boy, "I do. You see, Daddy, first he tried to cheat Mother, selling her some old berries when he had some new ones in the box he showed her. Then he whipped his poor horse. I guess that horse is glad the wagon broke down. It's mean to beat an animal. Don't you think it served Mr. Higgins ex-actly right, Daddy?"

Mr. Horton glanced down at Sunny Boy, his eyes twinkling.

"Well, if you won't tell Mother I said so," he chuckled, "I'll admit that I agree with you, Sunny Boy. I wouldn't pull the wheel off his wagon, you understand, nor toss his onions and potatoes off into space, but if an accident like that had to happen, I'm not sorry it happened to Mr. Higgins."

"Yes, it *did* serve him right," repeated Sunny Boy.

They reached home "exactly right" as Sunny Boy said, and they told Mrs. Horton about the Higgins' farm and about Mrs. Higgins and the children who stared so much and about Sandy MacFall who had quarreled with Mr. Higgins and gone away.

When Harriet brought in the beautiful shortcake, all red and white and sweet, Sunny Boy had just come to the point in his story where the wagon had fallen apart in the lane.

"I guess those berries were mashed like the ones in my piece of shortcake," said Sunny Boy, examining his share of dessert with great interest.

"Poor Mr. Higgins," Mrs. Horton murmured. "He isn't a very pleasant man, but I'm sorry he had an accident. Probably he needs all the money he can make, selling his farm produce."

Sunny Boy looked at his daddy, who looked

at him. They knew it would never do to say "It served him right." Mother never said things like that.

"Will there be produce at Willow Farm?" asked Sunny Boy instead.

Mr. Horton laughed and said he hoped so.

"Because the country air will make us hungry," he explained, "and unless there is farm produce, what can we eat?"

"Oh, there are things to eat on a farm," Sunny Boy instructed his daddy. "At Grandpa's there were always things to eat. But I should like some children to play with."

Mrs. Horton, cutting a second piece of that red and white shortcake for Sunny Boy's daddy, smiled.

"Why, Precious, there will be some children at the farm," she said. "I don't know how many —but several, certainly. I think the farmer has some children of his own and I believe there will be children among the boarders."

This was interesting. Sunny Boy thought

about these children after he was in bed that night and as soon as he woke up the next morning he thought about them again. When he saw Nelson and Ruth Baker, which was directly after breakfast, he told them the news.

"Maybe you won't like the children," said Ruth Baker, who didn't always like new friends.

"Yes, I shall like them," Sunny Boy insisted. "I like any one to play with."

"You didn't like the red-headed boy yesterday," remarked Ruth.

That made Sunny Boy and Nelson laugh, because, as Sunny Boy tried to tell Ruth, throwing rotten tomatoes was not meant to be play.

"Why, your new hose came, didn't it?" said Nelson, suddenly spying the long black rubber coils on the cement walk near the cellar door.

The children were in the garden behind Sunny Boy's house. There was a gate in the fence between the Horton's back yard and the Baker's yard, and Nelson and Ruth spent as much time in Sunny Boy's yard as they did in their own.

"Daddy must have 'tached it last night after I went to bed," said Sunny Boy, who had not seen the hose till just then.

He and Nelson and Ruth went down the steps and gathered around the faucet to which the new hose had been attached. There was a tiny trickle of water, dripping to the pavement, and a little sparrow, that had been trying to drink at the little pool formed there, flew away when it saw them coming.

"It's a very nice hose," said Nelson politely.

"Turn it on, Sunny Boy," Ruth commanded.

Sunny Boy looked around the garden. It seemed to him that the golden glow plants looked pretty dusty. And his mother's flower bed, under the dining-room window, certainly seemed to be wilted.

"I think it took Daddy so long to 'tach the hose," said Sunny Boy, "that he didn't have any time to water the garden. That's why he left the hose on the faucet; he wasn't through using it."

"You could sprinkle the grass," Nelson suggested.

"Yes, maybe I'd better," agreed Sunny Boy. "If you stand over here, Ruth, I can turn the water on."

Ruth was always interested in whatever Sunny Boy and her brother were doing. Sometimes she was too interested. She liked to get close to whatever they were mending or fixing or experimenting with and she never liked to be asked to move away.

"I want to see you turn the water on," she said now to Sunny Boy.

Sunny Boy scarcely had room to move his elbows, but he didn't argue. Instead, he bent down over the faucet and tugged at the brass handle.

"It—it—sticks!" he panted, his face growing crimson. "I guess Daddy shut it off—pretty—hard!"

Suddenly the little brass handle gave way, the hose jumped, so much like a long snake that Ruth jumped too, and a shower of water

drenched Sunny Boy from his waist down. He tried to grasp the hose, but it twisted away from him and in another moment cold water poured over Ruth and Nelson, who both screamed. Before Sunny Boy could shut the water off, the hose had twisted again and a stream of water went right through the screen in the dining-room window.

"Oh!" some one inside the house cried loudly. "Oh, Mrs. Horton, my dress is completely ruined."

CHAPTER IV

GOOD-BY TO TOBY

SUNNY BOY, water dripping from him, stared at Ruth and Nelson. They were soaked from their hair, which was plastered flat to their heads, to their tan sandals.

"Where's that water coming from?" cried Harriet, dashing out of the kitchen door. "Why, Sunny Boy, what are you doing? Don't you know that water is pouring into the dining room and soaking Mrs. Peterson's silk dress?"

Then Harriet gave a little scream herself, for that hose had twisted once more and was sending the water spraying across Harriet's ankles and feet.

"Shut that crazy thing off!" ordered Harriet, but she herself reached for the faucet and turned the handle firmly.

As she turned it, the end of the hose slipped off and a final stream of water went over Ruth Baker who, as usual, was standing as close to the faucet as she could get.

"Oh, Harriet, how mean you are!" wailed Ruth. "I hate to get all wet and you know that I do."

Harriet had to laugh at that, for Ruth was already soaking wet and, anyway, Harriet had not meant to have the hose slip off.

"I never saw such children!" Harriet scolded. "Sunny Boy, you march upstairs and get into some dry clothes. Ruth and Nelson, you go and tell your mother that you haven't been drowned, but you have been helping Sunny Boy play with the hose. Your mother will know what happened the moment she looks at you. Hurry now, all of you!

The Baker children went into their own yard and up the steps into the kitchen of their house, while Sunny Boy stood and looked at his own kitchen door a little worriedly.

"Did I spoil anybody, Harriet?" he whispered. "Who said 'Oh'?"

"I told you," said Harriet a bit impatiently, for she had left her ironing to come out and see what the trouble was. "It's Mrs. Peterson. She came to say good-by to your mother, and I must say she wasn't a bit pleased to see a lot of water coming through the screen on her good dress."

"Oh, my!" Sunny Boy sighed, beginning to mount the steps. "I didn't mean to spoil her dress. Maybe I'd better tell her so, Harriet."

"Well, I would," said Harriet. "The water won't hurt her dress, because it is flat crêpe and water spots don't stain that. But her feelings are hurt and I think your mother's feeling are a little hurt, too. Soon as you get dry, Sunny Boy, you go in and tell them how it happened and that will make it all right."

Harriet was in a hurry to finish her ironing, but she let it wait a few minutes longer, while she went up the back stairs with the dripping Sunny Boy. She helped him get into a dry

suit and he went down the front stairs looking spic and span.

In the dining room sat Mrs. Peterson, talking to his mother. Mrs. Peterson was a large lady, with gray hair and a red face. She sat beside the open window, and sure enough there were splashes of water on her gray silk dress. But when she saw Sunny Boy standing in the doorway, she smiled at him.

"Mrs. Peterson, this is my Sunny Boy," said Mrs. Horton.

"I was playing with the hose," Sunny Boy began at once. "It twisted. I'm ever so sorry it spattered through the window, Mrs. Peterson; but Harriet says the water won't hurt your smooth crêpe."

"My smooth crêpe?" echoed Mrs. Peterson, looking puzzled.

"Yes, what your dress is made of," Sunny Boy explained, looking at the gray silk dress closely.

Mrs. Peterson's face got redder when she

laughed. It was crimson now, for she was laughing heartily.

"My dear child, I suppose you mean flat crêpe," she said, when she could stop laughing. "I'll have to tell my sister that—'smooth crêpe!' Well, Sunny Boy, don't worry about my dress. A little clean water won't hurt it."

Mrs. Horton had laughed, too, and when Sunny Boy went out to the kitchen and told Harriet, she also seemed to think that "smooth crêpe" was funny.

"Only, Sunny Boy," said Harriet, "I do hope you will keep away from the hose after this. Here I am, trying to get all your suits washed and ironed for you to take to the country, and yesterday you cover yourself with rotten tomatoes and to-day you nearly drown yourself. No living person can keep you in clean suits if you're not a little more careful."

"I'll be a little more careful right away, Harriet," Sunny Boy promised. "How long do I have to be a little more careful?"

Harriet put her finger against the electric iron to see if it was hot enough to iron a pink and white striped blouse of Sunny Boy's. It was just hot enough, for she began to use it at once.

"Well," she said, smiling across the ironing board at Sunny Boy, "if you'll be careful up to next Monday morning, I think that will be all right."

"Are we going Monday morning?" asked Sunny Boy joyfully.

When Harriet nodded, he climbed up on a chair, to count the number of days till Monday, on the big black and white calendar which hung on the wall.

"Only three more days, Harriet," he announced. "Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Only if you count to-day, that makes four."

"You'd better count to-day," said Harriet, "because you know you are going to be careful, and when you're careful, every hour counts."

So Sunny Boy took Toby and went out in front. He was sitting most carefully on the

steps when Nelson Baker, in a clean, dry suit, spied him.

"Hey, Sunny Boy," called Nelson, as soon as he saw Sunny Boy, "is Toby going with you to Willow Farm?"

Toby wagged his tail pleasantly. He liked to hear his name.

"No-o," Sunny Boy responded. "Toby can't go. Daddy says if we had a house, Toby could go, but we have to live in a house with other people, and they might not like dogs."

"I like dogs," said Nelson. "If I lived on Willow Farm, I'd *ask* you to bring Toby."

"Yes, but, you see, not all the boarders are used to dogs," Sunny Boy explained. "At least, that is what Daddy said. He said it isn't thoughtful to take a dog where you're not positively sure every one will like him as much as you do. Toby is going to stay with Harriet and her sister."

"Oh, that's all right then," said Nelson, much relieved. "I knew Toby wasn't going with you,

or you would have said something about it. So I asked my mother if we could keep him, and she said what would we do with him if we should go to the seashore to stay with my Aunt Emma?"

"Toby will like to stay with Harriet," said Sunny Boy confidently. "She gives him good things to eat and she says her sister Grace is afraid of burglars and she will feel safe with Toby in her house."

Nelson said again that it was all right, and he and Sunny Boy took Toby for a long walk so that he might know they were his friends—not that Toby didn't know it, but Sunny Boy was the least bit afraid Toby might not understand why he couldn't go to Willow Farm, he might think that Sunny Boy didn't want to take him along.

"Toby will understand that," said Mr. Horton, when Sunny Boy said something about his fear to his daddy the next day. "Toby always understands you, Sunny Boy. Suppose you and I take him to Harriet's sister's house. That not

only will save Harriet trouble, but will give you a chance to see where Toby is to spend his summer."

They could have taken the car, but both Sunny Boy and his daddy liked to walk, and as for Toby, he would rather have a chance to run and bark than ride in any car.

"He's the best dog ever, isn't he, Daddy?" said Sunny Boy, as they walked along.

"He is when he leaves the cats alone," answered Mr. Horton.

"Oh, he doesn't bother the cats very much—only strange cats. He's all right about cats he's been introduced to," declared Sunny Boy loyally.

Harriet's sister lived far over on the other side of the city, but the walk wasn't too long for Sunny Boy. His daddy said he would be a good country boy because he was such a good hiker. Toby was a good hiker, too. He was perfectly delighted to be outdoors with his master, and he spent most of his energy dashing ahead and then

dashing back to bark happily at Sunny Boy.

"This must be the house," said Mr. Horton, stopping before a very small, very neat house, set in the exact center of a large yard.

"That will be nice for Toby!" Sunny Boy exclaimed, looking at the yard admiringly.

Toby put his feet up on the white picket fence and looked over into the yard, wagging his tail. It was perfectly clear that he, too, approved of large yards.

"Let's go in," suggested Sunny Boy, "and see Harriet's sister."

Mr. Horton opened the gate and Sunny Boy, followed by Toby, went up a red brick path to a little green and white door with a brass knocker on the center panel.

"Let me knock the knocker, Daddy," begged Sunny Boy, who thought this way of coming to call was much nicer than ringing a doorbell.

It wasn't a long door, but Sunny Boy wasn't a very tall boy, either, and his daddy had to lift him up before he could grasp the little lion's head

and make it go rat-a-tat-tat on the green and white door.

He had just time to get back on his own feet when the door opened and there stood Harriet's sister. Sunny Boy knew it was Harriet's sister, because she looked exactly like Harriet, except that her hair was white.

She asked them to come into her parlor, and when she heard that they had brought Toby, she said he must meet her cat.

"His name is Miggs," said Harriet's sister, "and he is a wonderful cat."

She went out into the kitchen and came back with a large yellow cat in her arms. This was Miggs. To Sunny Boy's surprise, Toby looked quietly at Miggs and the cat stared quietly at him.

"Why, Toby chases cats when he is at home," said Sunny Boy.

"He won't chase Miggs," Harriet's sister asserted quietly. "You watch them." And before Sunny Boy and his daddy had to go, Toby and

Miggs were sitting quietly on the little side porch, which opened off the parlor, acting as though they were really old friends.

"You don't know how glad I am to have Toby," said Harriet's sister, following Sunny Boy and his daddy to the door, when they were starting home. "Harriet has told me so much about him and I do like big dogs. I like big dogs and big cats. I never could stand these little toy dogs that only squeak when they try to bark."

Sunny Boy gave Toby a big hug and told him he must stay inside the white fence. Now Toby was a very wise dog and he seemed to understand. He looked at Sunny Boy wistfully, but he stood quietly beside Harriet's sister and watched his little master go down the street, without attempting to follow him.

"I think Toby is going to have a very happy summer," said Mr. Horton cheerfully. "Harriet and her sister will be good to him. And now you and I must turn to and help Mother, be-

cause in just two more days we shall be on our way to Willow Farm."

Sunny Boy stopped thinking about Toby after that, because he and his daddy were most busy, helping Mrs. Horton pack, helping her close the house, and helping each other get the car ready. Sunny Boy, who had thought that Monday morning would never come, found to his surprise, that his "careful days," as he called the time from Thursday to Monday, flew past on wings and the first thing he knew Harriet was calling up the stairs to him:

"Sunny Boy! This is Monday morning! Are you going to Willow Farm to-day?"

CHAPTER V

BACON'S SPIDER

SUNNY BOY jumped out of bed, right into a great pool of sunshine on his bedroom floor. He peeped into his mother's room which was next to his and saw that it was empty.

"I must be the last one up!" thought Sunny Boy, and he began to dress as fast as he could.

His clothes were neatly arranged on a chair and his suitcase was packed—he had packed it himself. So in a very few minutes, Sunny Boy Horton, "as neat as a pin," went galloping down stairs. Harriet said he was as neat as a pin as soon as she saw him.

"Well, I wondered where you were," his daddy greeted him. "I'm depending on you to say good-by for me to Nelson and Ruth Baker, because I want to take Harriet over to her

sister's house and the moment I get back we must start."

Sunny Boy did not know till his daddy and Harriet had gone after breakfast that Mr. Horton thought it best for Toby not to see Sunny Boy in the car. Poor Toby might think Sunny Boy had come to get him and he would be unhappy to find he had been mistaken.

While his daddy was gone, Sunny Boy went next door to say good-by to Nelson and Ruth. He found them eating their breakfast and they came to the door with him, Ruth wearing her bib and Nelson carrying his napkin.

"Daddy said to say good-by for him, too," said Sunny Boy, starting down the steps.

"I hope you'll like the children on the farm," Nelson called after him.

"Maybe you won't, though," cried Ruth, and Sunny Boy looked back at her and laughed.

When he turned around again, there was his daddy and the car and his mother was already at the curb.

"Good-by! Good-by!" called Nelson and Ruth, waving napkin and bib from their front door.

Sunny Boy and his mother rode in front beside Mr. Horton, because that was where he liked to have them. The baggage was in the back of the car. Sunny Boy saw at once that Toby would not have been comfortable, if he had come with them. He would have had to sit among the suitcases and bags and he would not have liked that.

"Oh-h!" cried Sunny Boy, as they passed a cross street. "Oh, Daddy, I saw old Higgins—I mean Mr. Higgins and his wagon down that street."

"Do you mean that old man who tried to sell me strawberries?" asked Mrs. Horton, trying to see, too. "Why, I don't believe I would know his wagon if I saw it again, Sunny Boy. I certainly shouldn't recognize him from a distance."

"I know his horse," Sunny Boy explained. "His horse bends in his knees, Mother. I think

it is an old horse and his knees are not very good."

"I'm sorry for old horses who have to work," said Mrs. Horton, and Sunny Boy said he was, too.

"When I grow up, I'll have a farm for old horses," he decided, and that idea pleased him so much that he began to pretend he had the farm. His mother helped him with questions, and before they knew it, they had the buildings all painted and the fields all planted and a great big red barn filled with tired old horses eating hay and corn. Mr. Horton said he could see that barn in his mind.

"There's Mr. Higgins' horse eating his supper," said Sunny Boy's daddy, as though he really did see the barn. "Only I'm a little worried about him. I really am."

"Why, Daddy?" Sunny Boy asked quickly.

"He's so fat," said Mr. Horton solemnly. "I think he's too fat to go through the door. Mark my words, Sunny Boy, when you try to get that

horse out into the pasture, you'll find he's too fat to go through the door. You'll have to take down part of the barn."

Sunny Boy giggled and Mrs. Horton said she never heard such nonsense.

"You'd better pay attention to the animals that are walking around us," she said, "and not let your imaginations run away with you."

That made Sunny Boy and his daddy look, and there, directly ahead of them, but some distance away, was a cow.

"A large cow," Sunny Boy said.

When they came closer to her they saw that she was not only a large cow, but she seemed to be a very stupid one, because she stood squarely across the road. They could see no farm for her to live on, only vacant lots and small houses here and there. Centronia was behind the Hortons, but they had not yet reached the real country.

"Who in the world keeps a cow in this section?" exclaimed Mr. Horton.

"I think some farmer has been driving a herd through here and lost one," Sunny Boy's mother said.

"I don't see how you can lose a cow," argued Sunny Boy, who lost things himself, to be sure, but always little things out of his pockets, like nails and string and seashells.

"Well, once I lost a little boy in New York City," Mrs. Horton said, and that was quite true. Sunny Boy had been lost in that large place.

Mr. Horton stopped the car and the cow stood staring at them. She did not seem to wish to move aside at all.

"We'll have to get out and speak to her," decided Mr. Horton. "Mother, what does one say to a cow to get her to let a car have the right of way?"

"Don't say anything," Mrs. Horton counseled. "Lead her into one of those vacant lots where she will find something to eat, poor thing. She doesn't know how to get out of the road."

Mr. Horton opened the door of the car and got out. Sunny Boy followed him. The cow looked at them both and shook her head.

"I don't think she likes us," whispered Sunny Boy.

"Don't go too near her," Mr. Horton told him. "She may be cross. If you'll help me take down that piece of fence rail, Sunny Boy, I'll try to chase her into that lot."

He pointed to a fence which enclosed a lot evidently used as a dumping place for tin cans. It didn't look very interesting, even as a yard for a cow, but it was the only place where there was a fence.

Sunny Boy and his daddy took off three long rails and that left a gap in the fence wide enough for even a large cow to go through. The cow watched them as they worked, but she did not move.

"Now let me get a stick and I'll chase her in," said Mr. Horton, picking up a branch from a tree which was close at hand.

He started after the cow and she began to run, not very fast, but with a rocking motion that made Sunny Boy laugh. She didn't want to go through the gap in the fence at all, but Mr. Horton got her close to it and then stood there and would not let her move away.

"You have to go through," Sunny Boy shouted to the cow. "My daddy says you have to go through."

Just as though she understood, the cow gave one last angry switch of her tail and, putting down her head, ran through the gap and found herself in among the tin cans.

"Now we'll put up the rails!" shouted Sunny Boy, who always shouted when he was excited.

In no time at all they had that cow safely penned in, and though she stared at them reproachfully, as Mr. Horton said, they had really done her a kindness. An automobile, coming around the bend in the road at a high rate of speed, might not have seen her in time to stop.

Sunny Boy looked back once as Mr. Horton

started their car and saw the cow resting her chin on the top rail of the fence and staring mournfully after them.

"I hope whoever owns the poor creature will find her," said Mrs. Horton, "for there can't be much to eat where she is now."

Sunny Boy hoped for the same thing so much that he fairly beamed when, an hour later, a farmer in a little rusty red car stopped them and asked loudly:

"Say, have you seen anything of a cow wandering along the road?"

"He owns the cow!" Sunny Boy cried excitedly. "Daddy! Mother! He owns the cow!"

Sunny Boy was right. The man in the rusty car did own the cow. He explained that he had bought four cows at a sale and had driven them home and one had not been able to keep up with the rest.

"She was so slow, I thought the sun was too much for her," said the man, "so I tied her to a stake and meant to fetch her after I'd got the

others safe home. But I've gone a mile past where I left her and I haven't seen hide nor hair of her."

When Mr. Horton told him that his cow was safely fenced in and likely enough would be safe until he could reach her, the man was plainly pleased.

"Wish I could do something for you," he said over and over. "Wish I could do something for you. I call that down right neighborly, taking a fool cow off the road. Wish I could do something for you."

"Well, you can," said Mr. Horton, with his pleasant smile. "Tell us a good roadside stand where we can get our lunch. We're going north till we get to Haddon's Corners, and if you can recommend a good stand along this road, you'll be doing us a real favor.

"You go to Bacon's Spider," the man directed. "That's a good clean place and not more than two miles from here straight up the road. They have tables where you can sit down, and it's

good clean cooking. Man named Bacon runs it, and his daughters help him."

Mr. Horton thanked him, and they drove on.

"Now he'll get his cow and that's nice," said Sunny Boy, in a satisfied voice. "Only I never knew before that people like spiders to eat."

His daddy looked at his mother and laughed.

"A spider is another name for a frying pan, Sunny Boy," Mrs. Horton explained. "It's just the same as though we said 'Bacon's Frying Pan.' I suppose this Mr. Bacon thought his name would remind people of frying bacon and he might as well use it in his business."

But even Mrs. Horton was not prepared for the little roadstand restaurant which they presently reached.

"It's a frying pan!" squealed Sunny Boy in great delight. "I wish Nelson Baker could see it! We're going to eat in a frying pan!"

The front of the place was round and painted black, so that it did look like a frying pan. The handle, which stuck straight up in the air, was

the chimney. There were windows and doors cut in the frying pan and they were outlined with red paint. Sunny Boy had never seen a place like this, and he was greatly pleased.

"Well, we might as well go in and be fried in the frying pan, I suppose," said Mr. Horton.

There were several cars parked on the grass plot before the restaurant, and, when they entered the door, they found the fairly large, round room comfortably filled.

"Everything's round," said Sunny Boy, staring about him.

The tables were round, and the mirrors were round. Mr. Horton said that even Mr. Bacon's daughters were round. Sunny Boy said yes, they were. But his mother said "Sh!" and shook her head at his daddy. Certainly Mr. Bacon's daughters were very fat and they had round, good-humored faces. There were three of them and they waited on the tables.

"M'm, I smell something good," sniffed Mr. Horton. "Crullers, Mother! I see crullers!"

Sunny Boy looked, and he saw crullers, too. A woman, who must have been Mrs. Bacon because she was round and fat like the daughters, but her hair, under her white cap, was gray, was frying crullers in a deep black kettle. As Sunny Boy watched, she lifted out a wire basket and tumbled a batch of golden brown crullers out on a snowy white cloth spread over a table beside her stove.

"You can not begin with crullers," said Mrs. Horton firmly. "Sandwiches, at least, and milk for Sunny Boy. Then you may have crullers, but I think I'll have some watermelon."

This was the nicest place! Over against one wall—or where a wall would be if the room hadn't been round like a ball—Sunny Boy saw watermelons neatly stacked. There was a show case with ice inside it and great slices of cut watermelon rested on the ice, ready for dessert.

Mr. Horton insisted that fried egg sandwiches were the right kind to eat while traveling, and he persuaded Sunny Boy's mother to have that

kind. Sunny Boy didn't need to be persuaded —he liked fried egg sandwiches. He had milk to drink, though he almost forgot to drink it, because he was so interested in watching Mrs. Bacon fry crullers.

"Now for the crullers," said Mr. Horton, when they had finished their sandwiches.

Their waitress started for the stove where the crullers were being made, and Sunny Boy watched her. He wanted to see her shake powdered sugar over the doughnuts after she arranged them on a plate.

"Oh-h! Ah-h!" some one cried suddenly.

Sunny Boy stood up and pointed, while behind him a woman's voice rose in a shrill scream.

"The place is on fire!" she began to cry. "Let me get out! The place is on fire!"

CHAPTER VI

WILLOW FARM

IN an instant every one at the tables in the restaurant had sprung to his feet. Sunny Boy had seen the quick blaze over by the stove where the crullers were being fried. This blaze was now going up, up, straight toward the ceiling.

"Stay here!" commanded Sunny Boy's daddy in a low tone. "There's no danger, if you keep still. I'll be back in a minute."

He ran through the doorway and disappeared.

Sunny Boy looked around. His mother was bending over the woman who had sat at the table behind them. It was her voice Sunny Boy had heard calling, "The place is on fire!" Now she lay on the floor and some one held her head

while Mrs. Horton knelt and with a napkin which she kept dipping in a glass of water she was gently bathing her face.

"What'll *I* do?" Sunny Boy asked himself eagerly.

He didn't feel at all afraid, but he certainly was excited. Men were rushing backward and forward and didn't seem to be doing anything at all. Some one was shouting to some one else to bring a bag of salt. One mother had stood her little girl right in the center of a table—probably, Sunny Boy thought, she felt that no one could possibly step on a little girl who stood on a table.

"Oh, the watermelons!" cried Sunny Boy suddenly.

He made a dash for the beautiful green and white watermelons that were stacked against the wall. His mother wanted watermelon for her dessert, and if they were burned she couldn't have any. Besides, reasoned Sunny Boy, watermelons must be valuable. He bent his sturdy

little back and began to roll a melon across the floor toward the door.

It wasn't the easiest work in the world, mainly because people kept getting in the way. They didn't seem to know where they were going, but they dashed around and Sunny Boy, rolling his watermelons, decided, with some vexation, that some of these men and women must have more than two legs apiece, so many feet got in his way.

He had managed to roll two watermelons through the door and out into the yard and was starting to roll a third one, when his own daddy came running through the door and at the sight of him a little cheer went up in the room.

Mr. Horton carried the fire extinguisher from his car in his arms and he turned the stream directly on the red blaze and the thick smoke and in another moment the fire was out!

Then every one began to talk at once and to wonder why they had not thought to get the fire extinguishers from their cars. The lady on the

floor sat up and wiped her face and eyes and Mrs. Horton put the glass of water back on the table.

"Hey, how did the watermelons get out in the yard?" called a little fat man from the doorway.

He was Mr. Bacon and he had been in the kitchen when the fire started. He had run out in the yard to get a pail of water from the pump and there he had seen the two watermelons Sunny Boy had rolled out.

"I saved them!" cried Sunny Boy joyfully. "Mother wants watermelon for dessert!"

Every single person in that room began to laugh, and the more they laughed, the harder it seemed for them to stop. Sunny Boy looked a little puzzled at first, but when he saw them all laughing he had to laugh, too.

"I'll bring your mother a lovely piece of ice cold watermelon," the girl who was waiting on their table promised.

Sunny Boy and Mr. Horton found they would

have to have watermelon also, for the fat in the cruller pot had boiled over and started the fire, and the dough, as well as the cooked crullers, had been spoiled by the water and the handfuls of salt and the chemicals from the fire extinguisher.

Mr. Bacon wanted Sunny Boy to take a watermelon in the car with him, but his daddy said no, that they were going to a farm and really didn't need a watermelon. So Mrs. Bacon insisted that he take a dozen of her best homemade cookies with him in a bag, and they all came out to see the Hortons drive away.

"Never saw any one save watermelons in a fire—ha-ha!" said Mr. Bacon, waving a large iron spoon at Sunny Boy, who waved his handkerchief as long as he could see Bacon's Spider.

"It's a good thing you put that fire out, Daddy," said Sunny Boy seriously, when they had turned a corner in the road and were speeding along on the last lap of their journey to Willow Farm.

"I don't see how Daddy could think of the fire

extinguisher," Mrs. Horton remarked. "I never remembered that we had one."

"I saw a fire once at a foundry, a small blaze in the shipping room," said Mr. Horton. "There were three extinguishers on the wall to be used in just such an emergency and the clerks were so rattled that they ran two hundred yards across the side yard to get a bucket of water which hung in the corridor of another building. After that I find that I remember 'fire extinguisher' when there is a fire."

Sunny Boy resolved that he would remember that, too, and all the rest of the way to Willow Farm, except for a very few minutes when he was taking a nap, he thought about fires and what he would do and, above all, what he would save when he saw his next fire.

When Sunny Boy awoke from his nap they were passing through a small village. The first thing his eyes rested on was a big sign advertising ice-cream cones.

"Oh, Mother, can't we get some cones?"

"I suppose so—it is still quite a ride to the farm," was the answer.

So they stopped at a refreshment stand and each got a cone filled with strawberry ice-cream. And, my! how good they tasted.

"And now for the farm!" cried Daddy, and in a few seconds they were again on the way.

It was almost five o'clock in the afternoon when they came to the first fence of Willow Farm. Daddy Horton said it was the first fence, and of course he knew, because he had been there before. Sunny Boy sat up straighter and looked around him and Mrs. Horton straightened her hat and put on her gloves.

"Where's Willow Lake?" asked Sunny Boy disappointedly. "We didn't pass Willow Lake while I was asleep, did we?"

"No, you haven't missed a thing," answered his daddy, smiling. "Willow Lake is a mile or more from the farm. You can't see the river, either, from this side of the farm. The river is at the back of the farm."

"I do hope it isn't very deep," said Mrs. Horton a little anxiously. "I don't like deep rivers where children expect to play."

Sunny Boy hoped the river *was* deep. He thought he could have more fun on a real river than on a little "safe" one.

"Oh, what a beautiful place!" exclaimed Mrs. Horton, as they turned into a long green lane, bordered on each side with willow trees.

"The whole section is famous for the willow trees," Mr. Horton explained. "They grow everywhere. Wait until you see the river—the banks are beautiful."

This green lane led up to the house and the willow trees followed it all the way.

"What a nice house!" said Sunny Boy, when he saw it.

The house was white with green shutters. It stood level with the fields on three sides, but back of it the land sloped down to an orchard. Over the tops of these fruit trees could be seen Willow River sparkling in the sun. The drive circled

the house, so that the Hortons went clear around it before they found the wide side doors where automobiles were meant to park.

Sunny Boy, looking about him eagerly, saw four children at once. They were playing with a little gray donkey that wore a scarlet blanket and looked exactly like a toy donkey Ruth Baker had, except, of course, that it was much larger. At that, it wasn't a large donkey.

Sunny Boy, standing quietly on the ground while his daddy helped his mother out and took the baggage from the car, saw that three of the children were boys—two who looked older than himself and one who seemed to be about Sunny Boy's own age. The little girl was nine or ten years old. She had a very sweet face and Sunny Boy thought her pink dress was lovely.

They were playing with the donkey, but they were watching Sunny Boy, too. He looked over his shoulder as he followed his daddy and mother up the steps, and one of the boys waved to him.

"Well, well, I'm sorry I didn't hear you drive

up," said a cheerful-looking, brown-eyed woman, hurrying up to them. "I'm very glad to see you. Your rooms are all ready for you."

She shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Horton and smiled at Sunny Boy. Her name was Mrs. Cranberry and she and her husband owned Willow Farm.

She took them upstairs to a large, beautifully clean room, with a cunning little room opening off it. That was for Sunny Boy, of course. She told them that supper would be ready at half-past six and then she left them, after telling Mr. Horton that the cars were kept on the floor of "the old barn."

"I like it here," said Sunny Boy, as his mother poured water out of a china pitcher into a china bowl for him to wash in.

There was a nice bathroom on their floor, but all the rooms had bowls and pitchers in them. Sunny Boy thought it was fun to wash in a bowl with red poppies sprinkled over it.

Just as he was drying his hands, a knock

sounded on the door and his mother went to answer it.

"How do you do?" said a little voice. "I'm Irma Cranberry and I thought perhaps Sunny Boy would like to come and play with us a little while. My mother says there is time before supper."

It was the little girl Sunny Boy had seen on the lawn, and she had known his name before he knew hers, because, you see, Mr. Horton had been at the farm to engage the rooms and had told Mrs. Cranberry about Sunny Boy.

"Run along, Sunny Boy, and we'll come down as soon as I do a little unpacking," said Mrs. Horton.

CHAPTER VII

FRIENDS TO PLAY WITH

IRMA CRANBERRY led Sunny Boy down a different staircase from the one he had gone up, and she talked every step of the way.

"Those three boys you saw are spending the summer here," she told him. "Their names are Ben and Fred Gains and David Orton. I was hoping you'd have a sister after I found out Mr. Horton told Mother your name was Sunny Boy. I like girls to play with, though I have a good time with Ben and Fred and David."

The staircase led down to a door on the other side of the house and there were the three boys and the donkey waiting for Sunny Boy.

"Here's Sunny Boy Horton," said Irma. "He knows your names, because I told him. The

donkey is Jojo, and we have lots of fun with him."

In a few minutes Sunny Boy found out that Ben and Fred were the two older boys and that David Orton was the boy who was just as tall as he was. He also discovered that the donkey was used to being ridden, and that he bore patiently having three or four children get on his back at once.

"If he gets tired, he just bucks and we all fall off," said Irma, as though falling off a donkey was nothing to worry about.

She wanted Sunny Boy to have what she called "a nice ride," and that, it seemed, was a ride on Jojo alone.

"You've all ridden Jojo all day long," said Irma to the three other boys. "Now you stay off and let Sunny Boy have a ride before supper. He'll have to go to bed early, because every one goes to bed early the first night they get here. The air makes them sleepy and they're tired from so much traveling."

Irma, Sunny Boy perceived, knew about people who traveled. Sunny Boy's mother always wanted him to go to bed early after a long automobile trip.

"Let Sunny Boy get on," said Irma again, pushing David gently out of the way.

Sunny Boy scrambled up on the scarlet blanket which was the only saddle on the donkey. There were no reins either. Irma explained that you "poked" Jojo with your knees when you wished him to go.

"Poke him now!" cried Irma encouragingly.

Sunny Boy obediently brought his firm little knees against the gray sides of the donkey as hard as he could. Jojo gave an indignant snort, stared wildly around the group for a moment, and then started off, full tilt, for his own snug box stable in the barn.

"Whoa! Whoa!" shouted Ben, and Irma made a grab for the donkey's tail.

Luckily she missed it, because no donkey takes kindly to having his tail pulled and it is quite

likely that Jojo might have kicked her if she had succeeded in pulling his. As it was, Irma and Ben and Fred and David were left behind while the donkey flew across the lawn, through the barnyard gate, and headed for one of the barns.

Sunny Boy had been taken completely by surprise, but he had enough presence of mind to hold fast to Jojo's neck with both arms and hands. He was unmercifully jolted and his feet flopped up and down, for there were no stirrups, of course. But he did stick on.

The donkey raced for a barn door, but when he reached it, it was shut and barred. The little animal stopped so suddenly that Sunny Boy almost shot over his head. Then, before Sunny Boy could slip off, the donkey wheeled and was racing off again.

"Maybe—he—won't—stop—in—time for supper!" gasped Sunny Boy, who wondered what he should do if Jojo took it into his head to run off the farm.

"I wouldn't know how to find my way back when I fell off," Sunny Boy thought, rather anxiously.

"Hey, where are you going?" shouted a man, stepping out from behind one of the farm buildings and staring at the donkey as it ran past him.

"He's running away!" Sunny Boy called over his shoulder.

"Bill! Hey, Bill! Stop the donkey!" shouted the man in such a loud voice that Sunny Boy would have put his hands over his ears if he had not needed them to hold him on the donkey.

"Stop the donkey, Bill!" the man bellowed again.

Out from behind another building came another man. He seemed to know exactly what to do. He reached out a long arm, lifted the catch of a door, and opened it. The donkey saw him do it and made for the open door. Into the corn crib—for it was the corn crib where all the corn for the horses and chickens was stored—raced

The donkey flew across the lawn.

that bad little donkey, with Sunny Boy on his back, and as soon as Jojo found himself in a walled-in, dark place he stopped running.

"Scare you, Bub?" asked the man who had opened the door, peering in.

"No-o, not exactly," answered Sunny Boy. "I'm glad I didn't fall off, though. I didn't know donkeys could run so fast."

"Jojo runs away about once a month," the first man Sunny Boy had seen said. He, too, was now staring in through the doorway.

"And he runs fast," the second man added. "But he always stops if he finds a place to run into. Are you going to stay at the farm, Bub?"

"Yes, at Willow Farm," said Sunny Boy, who wasn't quite sure he was still on the same farm. The donkey had raced around so madly Sunny Boy would not have been surprised to hear that he was on another farm.

"You'd better run along and tell the folks you're all right. They may worry about you," one of the men said. "I'm Bill and this is Ed,

and you must be the Sunny Boy Horton the folks were talking about."

Sunny Boy hurried back to the house and met his daddy and Irma and the three boys hurrying in search of him. They were not exactly worried, Irma said, because she knew Jojo had a kind heart and wouldn't hurt Sunny Boy intentionally.

"But sometimes he knocks you off by rubbing you against a tree," said Irma, and Mr. Horton laughed and declared that he thought Jojo had a good deal of temperament for a gentle donkey.

Sunny Boy's appetite for his supper had not been spoiled by his surprising ride, but he was even more surprised to find that he was sleepy almost as soon as he had finished his gingerbread and whipped cream. He had thought it would be nice to go around and look at the farm after supper, but he could hardly keep his eyes open long enough to toil up the stairs after his mother and he never did remember getting undressed and going to bed. But the next day he found

that all the children at Willow Farm went to bed early. They played so hard during the day and they rose so early every morning that they were quite willing to go to bed before eight o'clock without a murmur.

Sunny Boy woke in the morning to hear some one singing. He didn't know who it was at first, but as soon as he understood the words he giggled.

"That's Daddy!" said Sunny Boy, hopping out and running across the room to peep into the larger bedroom.

There stood his father, tying his necktie at the mirror and he was singing this:

"I was going milking, sir," she said,
But I may ride a donkey instead."

"Huh!" said Sunny Boy very loudly from the doorway.

After that, Mrs. Horton said, no one in the house could hope to sleep, for Sunny Boy's daddy chased him with a pillow and before he

caught him they had made so much noise that it really was a wonder no one came to knock on the door and ask who could be laughing so much.

However, no one came, and when they went down to breakfast, everyone else, they found, was there before them. The night before, Sunny Boy, tired and sleepy, had not paid much attention to the people to whom he had been introduced, but this morning they seemed like old friends. They all sat at one long table in the sunny dining room and there were, besides the Hortons, Mr. and Mrs. Gains, Fred and Ben's father and mother, Mrs. Stephens, who was David's aunt, and Mr. and Mrs. Cranberry. Of course Irma was there and she and Fred and Ben and David could hardly wait till breakfast was over to take Sunny Boy out and show him the farm.

"What about the river?" asked Mrs. Horton, before she would let Sunny Boy go. "I must know about the water before Sunny Boy starts out to play."

"Oh, the children hardly ever go near the river," explained Mrs. Cranberry cheerfully. "They don't need to, for we have a brook where they can go wading and play with perfect safety. I believe the boys have a water wheel down there and they sail boats. When they do go to the river, they understand perfectly that they are not to step off the banks or try to sail any boats. Usually in the summer the river is as safe as the brook, but this year we've had heavy rains and the current is much swifter than I've seen it for some seasons. But the brook is quite safe."

Sunny Boy wanted to see Willow Farm before he saw the brook, and Irma and the boys were just as eager to show it to him. They went to the big barns first and saw the horses and the half-packed haymows. One barn, the oldest of all the buildings, was used as a garage. Sunny Boy saw his daddy's car standing on the floor there, next to Mr. Cranberry's car and the big touring car that belonged to Mr. Gains.

They saw the sheep in one pasture and a herd of cows in another. They met Jojo wandering around like a pet dog. He rubbed his nose against Sunny Boy's sleeve and seemed to be saying "Please excuse me if I surprised you last night." They visited the milk-house where the milk was kept and the butter churned. They saw the seven white hen houses and the pig house where clean white pigs were eating their breakfast as politely as pigs can be taught to eat—which is not, we must admit, very politely.

They saw Bill and Ed and three other men who did the farm work and lived in a green and white house of their own with a smiling cook, named Win, to do the housework for them. They saw the spring-house where the milk was cooled before it was put in the milk-house. They saw the ice-house, filled with great chunks of ice, and a vegetable cellar where the vegetables were stored in the fall to keep all winter.

"My grandpa would like this farm," said Sunny Boy and Irma beamed upon him, for

she loved Willow Farm dearly and meant to be a farmer and help her father when she grew up.

"Now we'll look at the river," said Irma, when she had shown Sunny Boy everything she could think of except the big fields where the crops were growing, and those, Irma said, all looked alike.

"We can't get to the brook without going through the orchard and you can see the river from there. An artist was here last summer and he painted the river the way he saw it through the trees. He said it was the most beautiful river he'd ever seen," Irma declared proudly.

Sunny Boy thought so, too, as soon as he saw the beautiful sparkling water through the trees. The orchard itself was splendid—rows and rows of apple trees, then rows and rows of pear trees, all the same size, and all leading down to the water.

"But the willow trees are nicest," said Irma. "My favorite trees are willow trees. David,

if you eat a green apple you will be sorry."

David was always trying to eat green apples and always finding them too hard, Ben said. Ben declared that he wished Willow River had not been so high this year, because he wanted to fish in it.

"You're always trying to fish," said David. "I don't see why you don't catch some fish in the brook; there must be fish there."

"Maybe; but they're little—not like the river fish," was the somewhat lofty reply.

"Huh!" was David's only comment on this statement.

Sunny Boy's sharp eyes had seen the brook. It ran through the orchard, down the hill, to empty into the river.

"There's some one fishing in the brook now," he said.

"Oh, no," Irma contradicted him. "There isn't any one fishing in our brook. It's posted. My father doesn't allow any fishing on our land."

"Well," said Sunny Boy firmly, but politely,

"there's some one fishing there now. I saw the sun shine on his white shirt."

Irma squinted and Fred shaded his eyes with his hand.

"Say, there is somebody there!" he cried in surprise. "He's fishing, too. Do you suppose he can't read the signs Mr. Cranberry has nailed up on the fences?"

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMER FUN

IRMA CRANBERRY was so indignant to think that any one would dare fish in her daddy's brook, after he had said they mustn't, that she started to run toward the man fishing. The boys ran with her, and as they came closer to the brook, they saw it wasn't a man fishing, but a boy—a boy with red hair.

"Why, I know him!" sputtered Sunny Boy. "I know him! That's Sandy MacFall!"

Irma didn't know who Sandy MacFall was, but she knew at once that she didn't like him. No wonder! Sandy scowled at her and looked exactly as unpleasant as when Sunny Boy had first seen him. You recollect when that was. Sunny Boy remembered, too.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Sandy Mac-

Fall?" scolded Sunny Boy. "Throwing rotten tomatoes at a girl! That's what you did!"

Sandy MacFall made a dreadful face at Sunny Boy.

"Well, what of it?" he jeered. "Guess I had a pretty good aim, didn't I? If you don't shut up, you'll find yourself in this brook, young man. I'll use you to scare the fishes."

That was too much for Irma.

"You can't fish in my father's brook!" she stormed. "It's posted and it's against the law to fish on posted land. My father will have you arrested."

"He's broken my water wheel!" wailed David. "Look at the pieces! I wish I had a brick to throw at him—I do wish I had a brick!"

Poor David was so angry he was almost crying. The pieces of his water wheel were lying on the grass and David had spent a good deal of time making that water wheel. Ben and Fred had helped him.

Sandy MacFall—for Sunny Boy had not been

mistaken and it was the red-headed boy who had worked for Mr. Higgins—stood grinning at the children. He had a tin box with fishing tackle and bait all mixed up together in it, and he wore rubber boots.

"You go away from here, Sandy MacFall!" cried Sunny Boy. "Irma says you can't fish in this brook."

"Try to stop me!" Sandy retorted, and he swung his rod and line in such a circle that the hook almost caught in Irma's pretty hair.

"You stop that!" shouted Sunny Boy furiously.

Sandy MacFall laughed and started to swing the rod again. But David had seen Ed and Bill coming through the orchard and now he called to them.

"Hey, Ed!" shrieked David. "Hey, Bill! Here's a fellah fishing in Mr. Cranberry's brook!"

Sandy glanced over his shoulder and scowled fearfully. He seemed undecided whether to grab

David and shake him, or run. But as Ed and Bill began to run at that moment, the red-headed boy snatched up his box of tackle and bait and took to his heels.

He splashed through the brook and ran through the field on the other side, climbed the fence and disappeared.

"Who was that?" demanded Ed, coming up to the children.

"Sunny Boy knows him," Irma answered. "He's a bad, horrid boy. He throws tomatoes and he broke David's water wheel and he wouldn't stop fishing even when I told him the brook was posted."

"Wonder where he lives," said Bill thoughtfully. "I don't believe I ever saw him around here before."

"He used to work for a farmer," Sunny Boy explained, "a Mr. Higgins who lives outside Centronia—that's where we live, you know. But Mrs. Higgins said Sandy MacFall quarreled with Mr. Higgins and went away."

"Guess he works for some farmer around here, then," said Bill.

Ed and Bill both said that Sandy wouldn't dare come back that morning, so they went on to mend the fences on the other side of the river, as they were going to do when they had heard David calling them. Irma rather wanted them to stay near the brook in case Sandy should come back to fish, but the boys told her they would take care of her and she wisely decided that four boys were fully enough "people to look after her."

"Let's go wading," suggested Ben, and in another moment they all had their stockings and sandals off and were stepping gingerly into the clear cold water.

As soon as they were used to it, though, it did not seem cold, and they waded up the brook to see the place where Irma said there were always fish hiding—a place under the roots of a great tree where the water had washed away the earth. Sunny Boy saw fish darting in and out of this

shadowy place and he knew that Sandy MacFall would have been glad to know about it.

"But don't ever tell him," said Sunny Boy to Irma. "Sandy is a bad boy. I wouldn't ever tell him I saw a fish in this brook."

"My father doesn't like any one to fish here," Irma declared. "He doesn't mind their catching fish; but he says they leave gates open and let the cows out and they walk right over the crops we've planted and never know the difference. See? There's the sign that says this farm is posted."

She pointed to a black and white printed sign tacked on an oak tree. Sunny Boy could make out the words, "No Fishing Allowed on These Grounds," and he was sure that Sandy MacFall had seen the other signs like that which Mr. Cranberry had placed on his fences and trees.

"Come on, we'll wade down the other side," said Ben. "We can go as far as the river, if we don't wade in it."

"You couldn't wade in the river," his brother

Fred corrected him. "It would be over your head."

"It wouldn't," Ben argued. "It wouldn't be any higher than—than my knees. It might be over Sunny Boy's head though."

This argument made the others laugh, for though Ben was taller than Sunny Boy he wasn't that much taller.

The five children waded downstream, having a beautiful time on the way, for a brook, as you may know, is about the nicest place in which to play on a sunny morning that has ever been discovered.

"If we could wade in the river, we could walk all the way to the ocean," said Irma wistfully.

"You might get tired walking," Sunny Boy reminded her sensibly. "I think it's more fun to wade when you want to, and stop and play whenever you get tired."

The others decided this was the better plan, and when they reached Willow River not one of them wanted to walk to the ocean. For Wil-

low River went rushing past so fast it sang a little song as it ran. The murmur was pleasant to hear but that swift clear water looked as though it might sweep small girls or sturdy boys off their feet and whirl them around as easily as it did the leaves and sticks that fell into it and were carried past the watching children.

Sunny Boy did not wonder that Irma said her favorite trees were willow trees. The banks of the river had a row of these graceful trees on each side and they were very beautiful. Altogether it was a lovely place and cool and shady, for there was a breeze blowing and Irma said that even on the warmest summer day there was a breeze from the river. There were "no fishing" signs all along the river, too, and Sunny Boy was more than ever convinced that Sandy MacFall had read the signs and fished the brook simply because he liked to do what was wrong.

When noon came Mrs. Cranberry blew a great horn to tell the children that dinner was ready. The horn made the most awful wailing sound

and the grown-ups thought it dreadful, but Sunny Boy and the other youngsters liked it.

Indeed, before he had been two days at Willow Farm, Sunny Boy knew he liked everything and everybody connected with it. He liked all the people and all the animals and he said that Jojo was a nice donkey and had run away with him only because he wanted to show him, Sunny Boy, the farm without waiting to be asked.

Bill and Ed admired Sunny Boy very much because he had "stuck on," as Ed said, when Jojo ran away with him, and the first time Ed drove to the village after Sunny Boy's arrival at the farm, he asked to take the children with him.

"That's because he likes you, Sunny Boy," said Irma, who was frankness itself. "Ed never wants to take us with him. He says he can't be bothered looking after kids. I perfectly love to go to town and see things!" finished Irma, beaming at Sunny Boy.

The nearest town was a mile away and for

the first half mile Willow Farm land bordered the road. There was a gate at the boundary line and Irma explained that the road there led to the hay barns, so that when Mr. Cranberry had hay to sell he could get it to town and load it on freight cars and save himself almost half a mile of traveling.

"Next week," said Irma, as they passed this boundary gate, "the town folks are going to have a drive for the hospital fund. They have it every year and when they get enough money they're going to build a county hospital."

The car they were in—a light truck—made so much noise as Ed drove along at top speed that Irma couldn't hear what Sunny Boy said to her and she had to ask him to repeat it.

"Let's help them make some money, I said," shouted Sunny Boy for the second time.

CHAPTER IX

SUNNY BOY'S PLAN

IRMA stared at Sunny Boy Horton. Ben and Fred and David stared, too.

Now, Nelson Baker and Oliver Dunlap and the boys Sunny Boy knew in Centronia would not have stared. They knew that Sunny Boy could make up the nicest games and that he was always making plans. But of course Irma and these other new friends did not know that yet.

"How can we make money for the drive?" screamed Irma.

She really had to scream, for the truck was making such a noise.

"Wait till we get somewhere and I'll tell you," Sunny Boy shouted, and Ed grinned at him and said he owed him a vote of thanks for that.

"I can stand just so much clatter," explained Ed, "and then it makes me nervous."

Of course no one wanted to make Ed nervous, so Sunny Boy waited patiently. He had not long to wait. Irma waited, too, but not quite so patiently. Indeed, Irma reminded Sunny Boy of Ruth Baker very often—Irma wanted things right away and so did Ruth.

When they reached the town, which was called Willowdale, Ed drove the car up to the railroad station platform and went in to see if a piece of hardware he wanted had come. He left the children in the car with strict instructions to stay there till he came out.

"Now tell how we can make money for the drive," commanded Irma.

"Well," said Sunny Boy, "you know that gate on your land, the one you said is at the boundary line? I thought we could have a stand there and sell things. People going by in their automobiles would buy things if we told them the money was for the hospital."

Irma bounced about in the seat and the boys looked interested.

"I think that's lovely!" cried Irma. "My mother will give us things to sell. You boys can build the stand. Let's go right home and start now."

"We can't go yet," the practical Sunny Boy reminded her. "We have to wait for Ed."

"What kind of things are we going to sell?" asked David.

"Oh, I know," Irma assured him. "Lemonade and apples and cookies. Mother will help us get it fixed. I wish Ed would hurry back."

"Maybe it will rain all next week," said Ben gloomily. "It's rained an awful lot this summer."

"Yes, it has," Irma agreed. "That's why the river is so high. But it may not rain next week. Almost always we have clear weather when the hospital is having a drive."

Ed came out from the freight station, carrying the new axle for the farm wagon over his shoul-

der. He stowed it in the truck and said he had to go to the store to get something for Bill and then he'd have to hurry right back to the farm.

"I'm sorry you won't have time to get ice-cream sodas at the drug store," said Ed kindly, who usually saw to it that his passengers had some little treat when they came to town with him. "But I promised Mr. Cranberry to come back as soon as possible; they want to get the wagon mended this morning."

"Oh, we have to hurry home, too," Irma informed him. "We have a 'portant plan to tell Mother, Ed."

Usually Irma teased to stay in Willowdale and wait for the afternoon movies to begin, so Ed was pleased as well as surprised to have her say she wanted to go home. He brought back a bag of lollypops from the store and the drive home was much more quiet than the trip to town had been, for every one was busy with candy.

Mrs. Cranberry thought Sunny Boy's scheme was a fine one and the other mothers were inter-

ested, too. The children wanted to do all the work themselves, so for several days the boys were busy hammering and sawing and nailing up boards at the boundary gate, to make a little roadside stand or booth. As they worked, Sunny Boy told the others about Bacon's Spider and how the cruller fat had caught fire and he made them all laugh when he came to the part where he had rolled out the watermelons.

"I'll bet we make a lot of money for the hospital," said Irma confidently.

Sunny Boy thought it was a pretty nice stand when it was finished. It had a small counter and four posts that held a piece of canvas across the top for a roof, and they had a table to hold the lemonade pail and a box to put the money in as fast as customers paid them.

The hospital drive was to last a week, but Mrs. Cranberry said that she thought the children would find two or three days enough to keep their stand going. She promised them a jar of cookies and some sweet apples and several little

jars of her own jam. Then they were to have lemonade. Irma made that—she could do it very nicely.

The drive opened on Monday morning, and that was a very busy time on the farm. The men were all busy with the farm work and the washwoman came to wash and the farm kitchen was so filled with steam and the smell of soap that Irma was glad to make her lemonade and hurry away from it. She carried the cookies and the jam. Sunny Boy carried the pail of lemonade, for he had a very steady hand. Ben took the glass cups. David had the apples and the money box and Fred carried the pan with the piece of ice in it to keep the lemonade cold.

It was a long walk to the boundary gate, and the children were out of breath and warm when they reached it. But it was fun to start to work, fixing their booth, and when Irma declared they must have some flowers, the boys were willing to pick her two large bunches of the wild flowers that grew along the roadside, while she ran all

the way to the house—and most of the way back—to get two empty bottles which would be the flower vases.

"It's going to look lovely," declared Irma, mopping her hot little face with her handkerchief. "I think you have the nicest ideas, Sunny Boy!"

Sunny Boy grinned. He was standing on the counter, smoothing out the piece of canvas, which did not lie smoothly. He happened to glance down the road and saw, coming toward them, a horse and wagon and a red-headed boy driving.

"Oh, my, here comes that Sandy MacFall!" exclaimed Sunny Boy in a low tone.

"I heard Bill say last night that he works for Mr. Lane," Fred said, also in a low voice. "He has a farm on the other side of the river, about a mile and a half from here—maybe two miles."

"I shouldn't think he'd want a boy like that to work for him," said Sunny Boy disapprovingly.

"Oh, you have to take anybody in the sum-

mer time," Irma explained. "My father has had the same men work for him summer and winter for five years; but most farmers have help only in the summer time. They have to have them as soon as the hay is ready to cut and then they have to take any one they can get. Besides," added Irma, "that Sandy may be good help. Though I don't believe he is."

Sandy was driving the bay horse at a smart trot, and whistling as he drove. He was almost up to the stand before he saw it. Then, to the dismay of the children, he called "Whoa!" in a loud voice and sat in the wagon, staring.

"What's this?" he jeered. Sandy certainly had a most disagreeable way of speaking. "What do you call this? Are you going to try to sell all the rotten apples and moldy jelly you can't feed the boarders?"

"You go away from here!" said Sunny Boy very sternly. "You get off this land."

"I'm in the road," Sandy MacFall told him crossly. "Guess I can stay on a public highway,

Mr. Smarty! Nobody will buy anything from you kids—your faces are too dirty."

Sunny Boy felt himself blushing and the others looked uncomfortable, too. They realized their faces might be streaked with dust, for they had been working hard. But it was a little too much to have this rough, mean bully tell them a thing like that.

"Gid-ap!" shouted Sunny Boy suddenly, clapping his hands together so that they sounded like the crack of a whip.

The bay horse jumped and began to run. Sandy MacFall almost fell out of the wagon and had to make a grab for the reins. He called something over his shoulder as the horse dashed up the road, but the children could not hear what it was.

"Say, Sunny Boy, I don't see how you think of things like that," said Fred, in evident admiration. "He might have been here talking to us all morning, if you hadn't called 'Gid-ap.' I'll bet Sandy was scared."

"He's the meanest boy I ever knew," Sunny Boy scolded. "Mother says not to mind him; but how can we help minding when he always bothers us?"

"Here's a towel and some soap," said Irma peacefully. "Mother gave it to me when I went to get the bottles for vases. We'd better wash our faces so we'll look nice when people come to buy."

All five faces were shining fifteen minutes later when an automobile slowed down and a lady called:

"Are you children selling something?"

Irma, much to her own surprise, ducked under the counter and Fred and Ben and David merely stared. Sunny Boy saw that he would have to do the talking.

"Yes'm," he said politely. "We have some very cold lemonade. And the money you pay for it goes to the Willowdale Hospital Fund."

"I'll have two glasses, please," said the lady, and drove her car close to the stand.

Irma came out from under the counter and ladled out the lemonade into the glass cups. Sunny Boy took the money—two nickels—and dropped it into the money box. Then they all watched their first customer drink the lemonade.

"That's very refreshing, thank you," said the lady, and the lady beside her smiled and nodded. "We wish you good luck. Good-by."

They drove away and David shook the box for the pleasure of hearing the money in it rattle.

"Here come some more," he said confidently.

A car was coming from the other direction. It was a beautiful long low car, with just one man in it.

"Hello!" he said, stopping as he saw the stand. "This looks fine! Have you gone into business?"

Sunny Boy explained again and the man said he hadn't had a sweet apple to eat since he was Sunny Boy's age and he would take two and a glass of the jelly for his mother. He paid fifteen cents for the jelly and the apples were two for

five cents, so that made twenty cents more to rattle in the box.

"Say, isn't this fun?" Irma cried, coming out from under the counter when the second customer had gone.

She said she wasn't one bit shy, but she just liked to keep out of sight. Whatever her reason, Sunny Boy had to speak to every customer. Irma would ladle out the lemonade, but she didn't have a word to say. Ben and Fred and David forgot to be shy after a while, for more people stopped and asked questions. By eleven o'clock they had eight-five cents in their box. Each one of the children had counted the money several times and they had decided that it would be fine if they could have a dollar before they had to go back to the house for dinner.

"Somebody coming!" called Sunny Boy joyfully, pointing to a cloud of dust up the road. "Maybe it's another customer."

"It's a wagon," Irma said. She had lived in the country all her life and even a cloud of dust

told her something. "It's a horse and wagon. Perhaps it's the postman and he'll buy some lemonade."

As the wagon came nearer, the young owners of the stand saw all too plainly who was driving. It was none other than red-headed Sandy MacFall.

"Whoa!" he was shouting to his horse. "Whoa, I tell you! Help, help, hip, hurrah, hurray!"

"Such a bad boy!" scolded Irma.

Sandy was standing up in the wagon and shouting. As he shouted he slapped the lines over the horse's back and so urged him to run, even if he did keep saying "Whoa."

"Look out!" cried Sunny Boy warningly. "Look out, or you'll hit the stand!"

Irma and the three other boys ran out the back—which was fortunately all open—as Sandy drove the horse and wagon over the strip of grass at the side of the road, straight for the little stand.

Down came the whole thing on top of Sunny Boy.

"Sunny Boy!" screamed Irma. "Sunny Boy, look out!"

The wheel of the wagon struck the stand. There was a crash. The poles swayed. Down came the whole thing, canvas, wood pieces, jelly glasses, lemonade pail and all, on top of Sunny Boy Horton, who had tripped and fallen as he tried to run.

CHAPTER X

THE CIRCUS

ARE you hurt, Sunny Boy? Are you hurt?" cried Irma, jumping up and down in her anxiety.

Ben and Fred tried to pull the canvas off Sunny Boy and David started to run down the road after Sandy MacFall, who was galloping off in a cloud of dust.

"You wait till I catch you!" David was shouting. "You big bully! I'll tell Mr. Cranberry on you!"

But Sandy was whipping his horse, and of course David could not hope to catch up with him.

He came back to the gate in time to see Sunny Boy, dusty and smeared but apparently unhurt, crawling out from under the wreck of the little stand.

"Everything's smashed," said Sunny Boy sorrowfully, looking at a great spot of red jelly on his clean blouse.

"Never mind, as long as you didn't get cut," Irma told him. "I was so afraid the jelly glasses would cut you, Sunny Boy."

Sunny Boy wasn't cut, though he did have a black and blue mark on his arm where one of the poles had hit him. He tried not to feel too bad because the jelly and the lemonade were spoiled. The apples had rolled in all directions in the grass and the money had been spilled from the money box and the dimes and nickels were concealed among the weeds.

"Look out for the glass," cautioned Sunny Boy, as the children got down on their hands and knees and began to search for the money.

"Here is a penny!" cried Irma.

"Here are two ten-cent pieces!" came from David.

"I've found two nickels and four cents," came presently from Sunny Boy.

"I see a whole lot under those bushes!" cried Irma. "Crawl under, Sunny Boy, and get them."

"I'll get 'em," put in David eagerly, and he dived down into a hole under some big weeds. Sunny Boy went down too—right in the dirt.

They were hot and tired by the time they had found it all and it was a disconsolate little procession that went back to the farmhouse when Mrs. Cranberry blew the great horn to tell them that dinner was ready.

"Why, Sunny Boy!" cried Mrs. Horton when she saw him, "what has happened to you?"

Everybody tried to talk at once, but finally the whole story came out. Mr. Horton had gone away for the day to fish with Fred and Ben's father, which upset a plan Sunny Boy had been turning over in his mind.

"I thought Daddy would tell Mr. Lane and he would whip Sandy," said Sunny Boy. "Or maybe have him arrested. That would serve him right."

"Oh, Sunny Boy, don't be thinking such things," Sunny Boy's mother begged. "Just have nothing to do with a boy like that. He's mean and cowardly and there's nothing to be done about him. Stay away from the road. I thought this morning that it is rather far from the house for you children to be. For all I know, an automobile might run into you."

"But Sandy's horse wasn't really running away, Mother," Sunny Boy protested. "He made the wagon wheel hit our stand. I saw him."

However, Mrs. Horton and Mrs. Gains and Mrs. Cranberry all said that the gate was too far from the house and that they didn't want the children to rebuild the stand. They added fifteen cents to the eighty-five cents and that made a dollar which Mr. Cranberry took in with him that afternoon and presented to the chairman of the drive committee, who wrote a nice little note of thanks to the five children and told them they had set a good example for every one in Willowdale.

As it happened, even if the stand had not been wrecked, no business could have been done at it the next day; for when Sunny Boy woke the following morning, he heard the drip, drip of rain on the roof.

"People wouldn't buy lemonade on a rainy day, would they, Mother?" he said, as he dressed with his nose pressed against the window and his eyes on the rivulets of water running off the trees.

"Nobody would, Precious," Mrs. Horton assured him. "So what do you think you will do, instead?"

"Play circus, I guess," said Sunny Boy, who was never at a loss when it came to planning something to do.

At the breakfast table Irma was a little inclined to be sorrowful.

"I hate to play indoors," she complained. "I don't see why it ever has to rain in the summer. It could rain enough in the winter, while we're in school, to last the whole year, I should think."

"You're no farmer's daughter," Sunny Boy's daddy said, laughing. "What about the wheat and the corn and the garden crops that need rain, Irma?"

"I'd water them with the hose," said Irma, but she had to laugh. She knew that rain was necessary and that she was a foolish little girl when she made a fuss about it.

"Let's have a circus," Sunny Boy suggested the moment breakfast was over. "We can have a circus out in the barn."

"Say, that will be fun!" cried Fred. "Come on, let's go out in the barn. We can have a pack of fun."

It was pouring rain and rather cold. But who minded that when there was a circus in prospect? The barn was not far from the house and they all had rubbers and raincoats. Out across the lawn they dashed, down the drive, up the road to the great red barn with its doors standing hospitably open. Ed and Bill were mending harness and they looked up with a grin as the

five small figures came hurtling over the door-sill.

"'Most drowned?" inquired Ed cheerfully.

"Huh, a little water doesn't hurt us," Sunny Boy replied, shaking himself like a shaggy dog who has been swimming.

"What you going to do?" asked Bill. "Is it going to be safe for two defenseless men to stay around this place?"

Sunny Boy giggled and Irma made a face.

"We're going to play circus," she said.

"Circus?" repeated Bill. "That ought to be good. We'll stay and watch, if the admission isn't too high."

"We haven't thought about the admission," Sunny Boy said. "We've just thought about the circus."

"Well, if it's a good circus, we're willing to pay admission, aren't we, Bill?" announced Ed. "You can give the money to the hospital fund drive."

This sounded like a good idea, but as Sunny

Boy was careful to explain, they were not yet sure the circus would be good.

"You can pay admission after you go out, if you like it," he finally decided, and then he wondered why Bill and Ed fell off their baskets and rolled around on the hay, laughing.

However, Sunny Boy had too much to do to be able to give much time to wondering what he had said that was funny. He had to plan the circus, for while Irma and the boys were willing to help, they didn't seem to know how to go about it.

"We'll need the donkey," decided Sunny Boy, "and the black and white calf. And Shep, if his rheumatism doesn't hurt him too much."

Shep was an old, old dog, who lived with Bill and Ed in their house. He was so old that he didn't do much except lie on a piece of carpet in the sun on fair days. He couldn't walk very easily, for his feet were crippled with rheumatism.

He was with Ed and Bill in the barn this

morning, and he wagged his tail when he saw the children, while his brown eyes danced. Sunny Boy thought he looked a little like Toby, but of course he couldn't do all the things that Toby could do, because he was so old.

"What else do we need?" asked Irma, while Fred and Ben dashed off to get the black and white calf.

"A pig!" said Sunny Boy with sudden inspiration. "A pig is not a usual animal, Irma! Let's have a pig!"

"All right," agreed Irma, who thought Sunny Boy was the wisest boy she had ever known. "But take a little pig, Sunny Boy. The big ones are cross and they're not very clean."

"Come on and we'll get a little pig," Sunny Boy suggested, and he and Irma put on their coats and went out to the pig pen.

They selected one of the baby pigs, and Sunny Boy scooped it up while Irma fed the mother hog some extra corn, so she wouldn't notice that they were borrowing one of her children. When

they got back to the barn, they found Fred and Ben holding fast to the rope around the black and white calf's neck. The calf wasn't sure that he wanted to be in a circus.

"Now," said Sunny Boy, as master of ceremonies, "you sit here, Bill and Ed. I think you can see everything from here."

The two hired men obediently moved their baskets to one side of the barn and sat down.

"The first act," said Sunny Boy, "will be Professor Jim-Jam and his trained donkey, Jojo."

"Who's Professor Jim-Jam?" inquired Ben curiously.

"You are," Sunny Boy informed him. "You have to ride around the ring on Jojo's back, standing on one foot."

Well, though Ben had never done that before, as he said, he thought he could do it. He led the donkey out from his stall and put the scarlet blanket on him. Then, as the others watched, Ben mounted to the back of Jojo and was just

ready to balance himself on one foot when the donkey took it into his head to go back to his stall and finish his breakfast.

"Whoa!" shouted poor Ben, forgetting to balance on one foot, and clutching the donkey's neck with both hands. "Hey, Jojo, whoa, I tell you."

Fred rushed to the gate that shut off the stalls from the main floor of the barn, but Jojo, like all donkeys, was very determined. He didn't intend to let a little thing like a closed gate hinder him, so he put up his little forefeet and jumped. Off his back slid Ben, down into the hay which covered the barn floor and made it a fairly soft place on which to fall.

Ben was shouting, Ed and Bill were laughing, and Shep was barking loudly. In the midst of this racket, Sunny Boy alone saw that Jojo had not been able to jump the gate and was caught, unable to go forward or back. The donkey's heels were beginning to fly and poor Ben, half blinded by the dust and excitement, was perilously close to those little black heels.

Sunny Boy dashed forward and grasped Ben by the collar of his sailor blouse. One strong, long pull, and he had dragged him away from the donkey.

"What are you doing to me?" demanded Ben, struggling to his feet and looking rather cross.

"Jojo is kicking," Sunny Boy explained quietly. "He's caught on the gate."

Ben saw then and the others did, too, and Ed and Bill came forward and released the struggling donkey.

"That was a good act, though," said Bill, whose face was still red from laughing.

"Is the circus over?" Ed asked disappointedly.

"It's just begun," Sunny Boy assured them. "Ladies and gentlemen," he shouted suddenly, "our next act will be—will be—a performance by Pin-Pin, the Educated Pig."

Irma stared and even Sunny Boy wasn't sure what he would have his educated pig do. But here was an audience expecting a circus and program there had to be.

"He has to ride the calf," said Sunny Boy in a whisper. "Come on, David, help me tie the pig on the calf."

Ben and Fred held the black and white calf while Sunny Boy and David tied the squealing little pig on its back. Neither animal seemed to like the idea very much, but Sunny Boy assured David the pig would like it better when he got "used to it."

"Hurry up!" gasped Fred. "I—can't—hold this calf much—longer!"

Sunny Boy tied one more knot in the thin rope and stepped back. He wondered where Irma was, but before he had a chance to ask, the calf gave a lurch and twisted its neck rope from Ben and Fred's hands.

With a leap, it landed in the center of the barn floor and began to tear around, the little pig squealing in terror. Shep jumped to his feet, barking wildly and began to pursue the calf.

"Look!" yelled David, pointing to the back door of the barn. "Oh, Sunny Boy, look!"

Coming straight toward them, was the mother hog, her eyes red and angry. She had heard her pig squealing and she was coming to its rescue.

"I must have left the pen door unfastened," thought Sunny Boy in great surprise.

Just as he thought that, a wild shriek sounded above him and he looked up to see Irma, a peach basket, and a frayed rope all come tumbling over the edge of the mow together.

CHAPTER XI

THE SUN COMES OUT

FOR a few moments the uproar in the barn was tremendous. Irma was crying, the mother hog was grunting terrific snorts, the baby pig squealed without stopping for breath, and Shep barked as though he wanted to summon every one on the farm to come and help.

"Keep away!" Ed shouted to the children. "Every one of you stand back. Bill and I'll get this hog back. Look out, Fred! I tell you don't go near her."

Of course Bill and Ed knew what the boys did not—that a mother pig, once roused, can be a very angry creature indeed. They had to use pitchforks to protect themselves and though they finally drove her back to her pen, they had first

to untie the baby pig and let him go before she would leave the barn.

When they came back from the pig pen, after fastening the pen gate, they found the boys standing just as they had left them. The black and white calf had gone to munching hay, Shep was lying down exhausted from his barking, and Irma was half in and half out the peach basket, just as she had tumbled from the haymow.

"What do you call it you were doing?" asked Ed, helping her to her feet.

"I meant to be Arnetta, the beautiful Aerial Wonder," Irma explained modestly. "But the pig made me nervous, he squealed so much. I was all ready to come down in the basket on the rope and surprise you all, when my foot slipped. I guess I was too near the edge."

Ed and Bill sat down on the floor and began to laugh. The more they laughed, the funnier they seemed to find whatever they were laughing at. After a few minutes, Sunny Boy began to laugh, too, and presently they were all laughing

and the big barn echoed with their merriment.

"This is the best circus I ever saw in my life," gasped Ed, sitting up and wiping his eyes. "I never had more fun—never! I don't know how you feel about it, Bill, but now that the performance is over, I think a quarter would be about right for admission. What do you say?"

"I say yes," Bill answered, and he took a twenty-five cent piece from his pocket and handed it to Sunny Boy.

Ed followed his example, and there was fifty cents more for the hospital fund!

"Well, I should say you'd earned it," said Sunny Boy's daddy when he heard about the circus at the dinner table. "Seems to me that circus must have been rather hard on the performers."

It rained all the rest of that day and the next till noon. The children found plenty to do—they played in the farmhouse attic, they made molasses candy in Mrs. Cranberry's comfortable, big kitchen, and there was a radio to listen

to when they grew tired of playing—but they were delighted to see the sun when it finally came out.

"Out of doors," said Sunny Boy soberly, "is nicer than anywhere else."

Every one was glad the fine weather had come back and all started to do the work which the rain had delayed. Mr. Horton took the car to the nearest city to have some repair work done on it—work which the Willowdale garageman could not do—and Mr. Gains went with him. They took their fishing tackle and expected to stay over night in the city where the car was to be overhauled. Mr. Cranberry and his men had a great deal of work to do in the fields, and even though the ground was sodden they decided they could make a start. Every one of the mothers, it seemed, needed to go shopping.

"I'll drive you to town," offered David's aunt, Mrs. Stephens, who had her own car. "The children will be all right—they can play outdoors and have a good time."

Mrs. Stephens did not know that Irma was going to have one of her "willful spells," as her mother called them. As soon as the older folk had set out for town, Irma declared that she meant to play up in the attic. She wasn't going out while the ground was so wet.

"I'll make sails for your boat, David, if you'll stay and play with me," offered Irma.

David had been wanting sails for his boat for several weeks. He wanted to play out of doors, in the sunshine, but he also wanted those sails. And Irma could sew nicely and she had made a beautiful set of sails for Fred Gains' boat.

"All right, I'll stay," David promised.

"We're going down to the mail box and we'll meet you in the orchard," said Ben to Sunny Boy.

He and Fred were always expecting mail, though as they never wrote any letters, their mother said she didn't see why they should look for any.

Sunny Boy wandered down to the orchard

and sat in the low crotch of a handy apple tree for half an hour before it occurred to him to wonder where Ben and Fred were. He liked to watch the water flowing past so swiftly and he was interested in the silly actions of a large black ant that ran up and down the trunk of the tree and didn't seem to have a clear idea of where he wanted to go.

"I don't see why Fred and Ben don't come," murmured Sunny Boy uneasily to himself at last.

He swung himself down from the tree and went over to the boundary fence. One of the men—not Bill or Ed, but an older man known as Buck, was working there among the rows of cabbages.

"Have you seen anything of Fred and Ben?" asked Sunny Boy, thinking that perhaps the two boys had passed the orchard and had missed him hidden among the leaves.

"Fred and Ben?" Buck repeated. "Why, yes; they've gone up to the woods with Si Har-

rison. He's hunting for a cow that broke out of his pasture. I saw Ben and Fred get in the wagon with him."

Si Harrison was a neighbor. Ben and Fred dearly loved to ride anywhere, and if Si came by with a team and offered them a lift, it wasn't likely they would refuse. But, thought Sunny Boy, they might at least have come and told him.

"Where are you going?" Buck called after him, as he turned away.

"Oh, just around," answered Sunny Boy, for he didn't know where he was going. He had to amuse himself, that much was clear.

The sight of the swiftly flowing water decided him. He would go down by the river and see if it was really as high as the boys had said it was. It was too wet in the orchard for comfort; water ran off the trees and dripped on him. Anyway, there wasn't much sun.

"Why," said Sunny Boy, as he stepped out from the orchard and found himself on the river bank, "there isn't any sun here, either."

As a matter of fact, the clouds had rolled up again and all the bright sunshine had disappeared. It felt hot and steamy, and, my, how high the water was!

It rushed past Sunny Boy, standing on the bank, not clear and clean as it had been before the rain, but yellow and muddy-looking. There were branches of trees swirling past in the water, and Sunny Boy thought that even Toby, who was a fine swimmer, might have trouble to swim against that current.

"I'll walk as far as the boathouse," Sunny Boy told a gray squirrel that was regarding him from a near-by tree with bright, beady eyes.

The boathouse was a ramshackle building which had not been used for several years. It was built on the extreme edge of the bank in a rather low section, so that it actually rocked when the river rose higher than usual in the spring freshets. Sunny Boy had never been inside it, but he knew no boats were kept there.

The boathouse was a half mile or so beyond

the orchard and before Sunny Boy could reach it, he felt something cold and wet splash on his hand.

Rain!

That drop was followed by another and then the whole sky seemed to open and the rain came down in sheets. Sunny Boy took to his heels and ran. He wasn't very wet when he dashed up against the door of the boathouse, and, to his relief, found it unlocked. He pushed it open and stepped inside.

The interior was dark—there were no windows—but at least it was a shelter from the drenching rain. There was a pile of burlap rags near the door and an old quilt. Irma had been the last one there and she had pretended she was lost on a desert island and had begged the quilt from her mother for a bed.

"I can wait till its stops raining," thought Sunny Boy, yawning rather widely.

He spread out the quilt and sat down on it. Through the open door he could see the rain

falling like streaks of silver. He wondered whether Ben and Fred were out in the wet.

If there had been any one to watch, presently he would have seen Sunny Boy's head droop just a little. His eyes closed. But he opened them wide the next moment. He had no intention of going to sleep.

Then his neck felt stiff and he thought he might as well lie down on the quilt; he could watch the rain just as well lying down as he could sitting up. So he stretched out comfortably, put his head on his arm, and the next time his eyelids closed they stayed that way.

Sunny Boy was asleep—so sound asleep that he never felt the slight jar the old boathouse gave when it slipped, slowly and gently, into the river, now a raging flood indeed.

CHAPTER XII

ALL AFLOAT

AT Willow Farm, no one missed Sunny Boy until his mother came home with Mrs. Cranberry and Mrs. Gains and Mrs. Stephens. Irma and David were still in the attic, playing, and Fred and Ben had stopped in the barn after they had helped Si Harrison get his lost cow home and were listening to Ed and Bill tell how they had once stopped a runaway horse.

"Where's Sunny Boy?" asked Mrs. Horton, the moment she came into the house.

"Up in the attic," the cook in the big kitchen answered.

She thought he was there with Irma and David, you see.

"I suppose the children had to go up there

when it began to rain," said David's aunt. "Too bad it has to rain and spoil their fun."

Mrs. Horton ran up to the attic and peeped in at the little blue and white door.

"Where's Sunny Boy?" she asked Irma, who was painting paper dolls.

"Why, Mrs. Horton, I haven't seen Sunny Boy since dinner time," Irma answered. "I don't know where he went. David, do you know where Sunny Boy went?"

"He went out to play with Ben and Fred," said David. "Want me to get him for you, Mrs. Horton?"

"Oh, no. He'll be in soon," Sunny Boy's mother replied. "They must be out in the barn. No one could play outdoors in weather like this. Just listen to that rain!"

The rain was pounding on the tin roof over the attic and it sounded almost as loud as drums.

Mrs. Horton went downstairs to her own room and put away her coat and hat. Presently Irma and David left the attic, and they were

turning the knobs of the radio when Ben and Fred entered the hall.

"Hello. Is Mother home?" asked Fred. "Gee, it's going to rain all night again."

Irma glanced at them disapprovingly.

"Where's Sunny Boy?" she said. "His mother wants him."

"Sunny Boy? Why, he hasn't been with us all afternoon," replied Fred. "What made you think he was with us?"

"You said you were going to play outdoors," Irma reminded him.

"Well—well, we did," said Ben, for Fred had turned a little red. "That is, we meant to play outdoors. But Si Harrison lost his cow and he asked us to help him find it, so we went with him. I guess Sunny Boy is around somewhere."

But he wasn't. Sunny Boy wasn't anywhere to be found. Mrs. Horton and the other mothers and even the fat cook looked in every room of the farmhouse, but they found no Sunny Boy.

The boys searched the barns and Ed and Bill and Mr. Cranberry helped them. But no Sunny Boy answered when they called or whistled.

"I don't see where he can be!" Fred exclaimed disconsolately, after they had visited every one of the out buildings and had whistled and called many times.

Buck, who minded the rain no more than a flea, as Ed had once remarked, came into the barn just then, soaking wet. He had remained to finish cultivating the cabbages, in spite of the weather.

"I don't suppose you've seen Sunny Boy anywhere, have you, Buck?" Mr. Cranberry asked the man.

"Sunny Boy? Sure! He was down by the orchard this afternoon," said Buck carelessly. "Say, Mr. Cranberry, the old boathouse is gone. Guess the high water got it this time."

Mr. Cranberry stared at Buck.

"Sunny Boy hasn't come back to the house, Buck," he said quietly. "His mother is worried

about him. You don't suppose he could have been in the boathouse, do you?"

Buck said no, and when Mrs. Horton asked him the same question, he again said no.

"Of course he wasn't in that boathouse, Mrs. Horton," said Buck stoutly. "You can't tell me Sunny Boy Horton could be carried away like that. Likely as not he's gone to Si Harrison's or Mr. Lane's to get in out of the rain. You'd better telephone them."

Mrs. Horton did telephone; but neither the Harrison family nor the Lanes had seen Sunny Boy.

Meanwhile, what was Sunny Boy doing while his mother walked up and down the farmhouse hall and tried very hard to think of something else to do that would help her to find her missing little son?

Sunny Boy was exactly where we left him—asleep on the old quilt. But he was having a most curious dream. He seemed to be on a merry-go-round, and his bed, the bed in his

own room at Centronia, was hooked on to a brown and yellow giraffe.

"My goodness!" gasped Sunny Boy, feeling his bed swing out with a jolt that threatened to send him flying through the bedroom window, "I never saw a merry-go-round like this!"

Then his bed swung out again and dipped and he felt himself sliding—and he woke up with a jump.

"Why, this isn't my bed!" said Sunny Boy aloud, and in great astonishment.

He knew it wasn't his bed, but for a few moments he didn't know what it was. Then he remembered! He must have fallen asleep on the old quilt in the boathouse!

"But it bobs up and down," he thought, still confused. "I wonder what makes it act so queerly?"

Underneath him, the floor actually was bobbing up and down. As he sat up and listened, the boathouse seemed to be struck by something, for there was a jolt. Everything was quiet for

a second, then the bobbing up and down began again.

"I wonder if it's still raining?" thought Sunny Boy.

He got up on his feet, but it wasn't very easy to walk, because the boathouse kept bobbing up and down. But Sunny Boy finally reached the door and looked out.

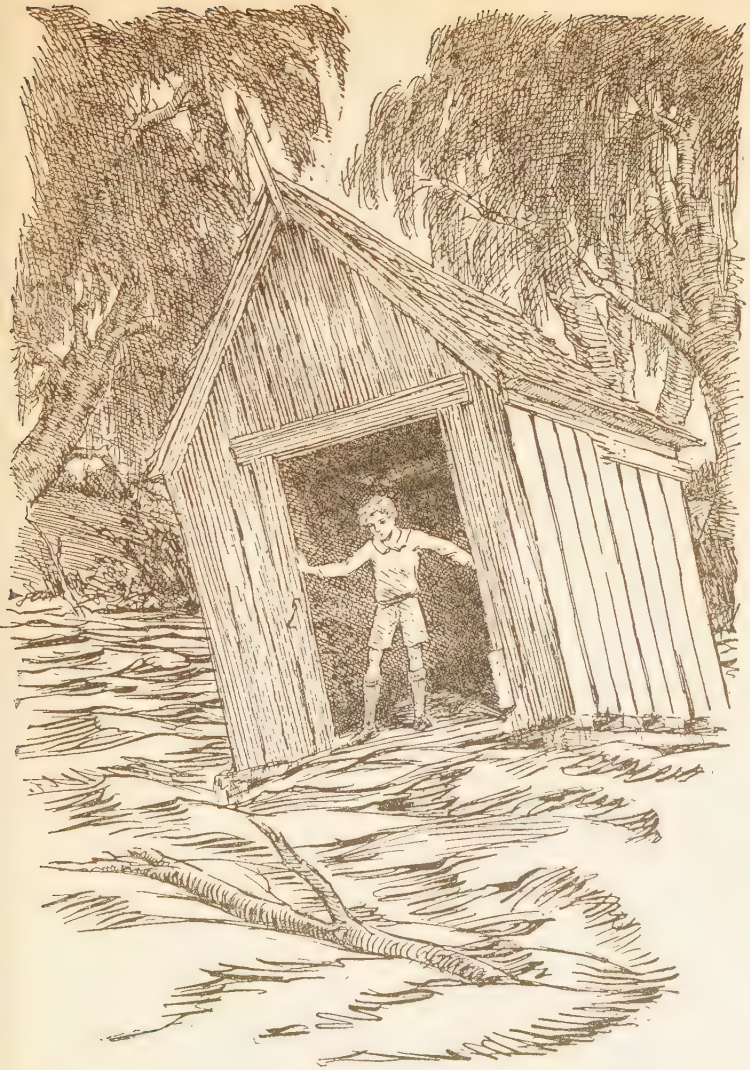
Well!

If he had been used to crying, which he wasn't, or if he had been the kind of boy who shouts for help as soon as he is afraid, which he wasn't, Sunny Boy might have burst out crying, or else called loudly.

For there he was, bobbing up and down in a frail, half-rotten old building on a river that seemed to be steadily rising higher and higher. It was nearly dark, too, and a queer yellow light blended with the shadows.

"Oh, my!" whispered Sunny Boy.

He was afraid. Any one would have been afraid. The water was so strong, so terribly



Sunny Boy finally reached the door and looked out.

swift! That crazy little boathouse danced up and down as though it were no more than one of the leaves that swirled past. Sunny Boy was alone, he was hungry and thirsty and he did not know what to do. He wished he had Toby with him—even Shep would have been a comfort in a situation like this.

"Perhaps the boathouse will sink and I'll drown!" thought Sunny Boy, clinging to the door with both hands and staring out across the rushing water.

It was still raining, but not as hard as it had rained during the afternoon. But the darkness was closing down and the water sounded louder and louder. The boathouse caught on a snag and jerked and bobbed and shook so that Sunny Boy expected it to break up into little pieces like a match box.

Then, with a shudder, it tore loose and drifted on downstream.

Sunny Boy stood at the door of the boathouse long after it was inky dark outside. He

strained his eyes, but he could not see anything, not even a light in a farmhouse.

A long black arm seemed to reach out from the shore. Sunny Boy's eyes were more accustomed to the dark now and he saw that it was the limb of a tree, overhanging the river.

If he could get ashore! Sunny Boy thought for a minute how it would feel if he should lose his footing and tumble into that rushing water. But then, he reasoned, suppose he didn't tumble, and he did cling to the tree branch and climb ashore!

"I'll do it!" he decided.

It takes longer to tell you what Sunny Boy thought than it took him to act. In less than a minute after he had thought of clinging to the branch of the tree, Sunny Boy grasped it. He meant to haul himself up. Perhaps he might have been successful if something wet and black and sputtering and vicious had not flown directly in his face!

Sunny Boy let go his hold on the tree and

fell backward into the boathouse. Two green eyes blazed at him and a black cat hurled herself into the furthest corner of the building and hissed at Sunny Boy as though she blamed him for all her troubles.

"My good-goodness!" sighed Sunny Boy. "I guess that cat was on the branch of the tree and I pinched her or something!"

The poor cat had indeed been on the limb of the tree and she wanted to be rescued as badly as Sunny Boy did. When she had felt his hands, she thought he was another enemy, like the river, and she fought him as only a cat can fight—with her claws.

But now Sunny Boy at least had company in the old boathouse, though the cat was so frightened she wouldn't let him come near her. Her eyes glared like balls of fire and to all Sunny Boy's coaxing she merely hissed and sputtered. But even an angry cat was better than nothing, Sunny Boy thought.

"I am so thirsty!" thought Sunny Boy, who

began to feel as though he might be sailing down to the ocean. Wasn't it Irma who had said the river went all the way to the ocean?

He was hungry, too. To add to his troubles, the water had come through the cracks in the floor of the boathouse and the quilt was soaking wet. Every time the boathouse bobbed up or down, more water came swishing over the floor. Cold and wet and dark! No wonder Sunny Boy couldn't whistle, even though he tried his best.

He had to sit down at last, because he couldn't stand up any longer. His feet ached and his legs ached and he was cold and miserable. And then, when he had sat down on the floor, as near the door as he could get, the poor black cat came crawling to him and curled up in his lap and made a muff of herself.

Sunny Boy tickled her gently under her chin and she began to purr. It was a cheerful sound, even in that dismal place, and Sunny Boy began to smile. A cat, purring in his lap, made things somehow seem more cheerful.

"I'll bet Toby would like you," he told the black cat. "Toby is good to cats. He hardly ever chases them."

He was stroking the cat a few minutes later when a crash sent the animal spinning out of his lap and across the room. The boathouse shook as though this time it must fall apart. Sunny Boy struggled to his feet and heard a terrific yell close at hand.

"Help! Hel-up! Oh, somebody come quick! I'm drowning! Hel-up!" the voice shrieked.

Sunny Boy peered out and saw the dim outline of another bobbing building in the center of the stream. Evidently his boathouse had collided with another small building. Then Sunny Boy drew back just in time, for through the small square window of the other building, half fell, half scrambled, a long lanky body and some one fell with a thud over the door sill at Sunny Boy's feet.

"Save me! Save me! I don't want to drown!" whined a familiar voice.

CHAPTER XIII

A LONG NIGHT

SUNNY BOY could not believe his ears. As for his eyes, they did not do him much good at the present. All they could make out was the dim outline of a figure.

"Save me!" whined the voice again, and then the owner of the voice began to cry.

"What are you crying for, Sandy MacFall?" asked Sunny Boy severely.

Sandy MacFall, for it was that disagreeable person who had fallen into the boathouse, was surprised, too. He was so surprised that for a moment he forgot to cry or whine.

"Who's that?" he asked, in astonishment. "Is that you, Sunny Boy Horton?"

"Yes, it is," replied Sunny Boy, so indignant that it seemed to him that it was only yesterday

the red-headed boy had thrown rotten tomatoes at him. "I wish I could roll you off into the water! It would serve you right!"

At the word, water, Sandy's fears returned to him.

"I don't want to drown!" he blubbered. "Oh-h, the water's so cold! And it's so dark! Sunny Boy, why don't you *do* something? Can't you think of something to do so we can save ourselves? We'll both be drowned! Oh-h, I've been afraid of drowning ever since I saw a cat drown once."

"I'll bet you drowned the cat," said Sunny Boy, with scorn. That was the truth, too, though he was only guessing at it.

"Well, I won't drown any more," Sandy promised. "Oh-h, look in the corner! I see a ghost!"

Sandy MacFall was, at the least, twice as old as Sunny Boy; but he did not seem to think it strange that he should expect the young lad to save them both, nor, when he thought he saw a

ghost, that he should clutch Sunny Boy and try to hide behind him.

Sunny Boy wanted to laugh. He thought of telling Sandy that he saw the ghost of the cat he had drowned, and then that suddenly seemed rather mean. Sunny Boy had a kind heart, and even though he saw that Sandy was a bully and a coward and knew him to be a cheat and thoroughly cruel, still the larger lad was really frightened now and just as unhappy as a pleasanter boy would have been, and Sunny Boy did not wish to make matters seem worse.

"That isn't a ghost," said Sunny Boy firmly. "That's a cat that climbed off a tree, a little way up the river. Those are her eyes you see shining."

"I hate cats!" Sandy MacFall whined. "They bring me bad luck. Oh, dear, see the water coming through the floor! We'll be drowned like rats in this little place! Why don't you think of something to do?"

This was a little too much, even for kind-hearted Sunny Boy.

"Don't you talk to me!" he said with a fierceness that surprised even himself. "You had no right to knock our stand over and you had no right to throw that rotten tomato at me!"

Sandy MacFall didn't answer. If, as was possible, he started to think of all the unkind things he had done, there surely was enough material to keep him busy and quiet for a long time. It is more likely, however, that he was frightened by Sunny Boy's new tone, for Sandy was a rank coward and any one who shouted at him louder than he could shout, usually could silence him.

They sat in the darkness while the boathouse bumped along, now stopping for a brief moment, now whirling on. The cat came and purred around Sunny Boy's feet and he picked her up and cuddled her.

He thought he would go and look out of the door again, in the hope of seeing at least a light

in some house. As he took a step forward, his foot struck against a tin box.

"What's that?" asked Sunny Boy sharply.

"My lunch box," Sandy answered dully. "I planned to go fishing to-night. Now I've lost my tackle and everything. I always had bad luck. I've had bad luck all my life."

Considering the way he acted, Sunny Boy didn't doubt that. Bad luck just naturally seems to follow the selfish ones. But the thought of something to eat interested him a great deal more at that moment than the question of Sandy's luck, good or bad.

"Is there anything to eat in the box?" asked Sunny Boy hopefully.

"Of course! Sandwiches and cold coffee," Sandy snapped. "You're not thinking of something to eat when we're likely to be drowned any minute, are you? I never heard of such a cold-blooded person as you are."

Now Sandy MacFall had had a huge supper at five o'clock that afternoon. He had set off

soon after with his fishing tackle and lunch box, prepared to spend the night along the river. Mr. Lane didn't like him to fish at night, for it made him sleepy and useless the next day, but Sandy never bothered his head about pleasing other folks. In the middle of summer the farmer had to do the best he could with whatever help he could get, so Sandy felt his job was fairly safe, even if he disobeyed. He had meant to spend the night fishing and get back to the farm early, before the farmer came to breakfast.

But Sunny Boy Horton had had nothing to eat or drink since noon that day. He was thirstier than he had ever been in his life and very, very hungry. If Sandy didn't care about the sandwiches and cold coffee, Sunny Boy did. In another minute he had that lunch box open and was drinking the coffee in long, grateful swallows. His mother thought he was too young to drink coffee, but of course she would know that this was an exception.

"Don't you want any?" he asked presently,

for his conscience would not let him take it all without offering Sandy some.

"No, I don't," that unpleasant person answered tartly. "I've got something to think of besides eating and drinking. I'm glad I'm not such a pig as you are."

For answer, Sunny Boy helped himself to a sandwich. The black cat sat purring in his lap and he gave her a piece of the bread and butter, crumbled on the floor. She purred more loudly and made little gobbling noises of satisfaction. Plainly she was hungry, too.

"These are good sandwiches," said Sunny Boy conversationally. "They're roast beef and currant jelly ones, I think."

He continued to eat the sandwiches and drink the cold coffee till everything was gone. By that time he felt much better—warmer and more cheerful. Not even a great wash of water that flowed up through the floor and swept over his feet and ankles could wholly depress his spirits.

"If we took turns keeping watch," he said,

when the last crumb of lunch was gone, "one of us could sleep."

"What do you want to keep watch for?" growled Sandy MacFall.

"Because we might pass a house or something," Sunny Boy explained patiently. "One of us ought to be awake so that if he saw a light he could wake up the other one and we could call to the people and they might be able to get us."

"There aren't any houses for miles around here," argued Sandy.

"How do you know where we are?" Sunny Boy asked sharply. "I don't believe you've ever been as far down the river as this."

"Well, maybe not. But there aren't any houses," declared Sandy obstinately. "And I can't go to sleep and if you do I'll pinch you till you wake up. I won't be left alone on a wrecked boathouse with that green-eyed cat glaring at me. She's going to bring me bad luck—I can feel it in my bones."

Sunny Boy was too exasperated to reply. He

knew now that Sandy was a poor sport, and to be a poor sport was, as Sunny Boy had learned from his daddy, something so bad as to be almost beneath the notice of people who played fair.

The boathouse was rocking more than ever now and Sunny Boy had to crawl on his hands and knees to reach the door. He got there just in time to see something black looming up. Then there was a crash and a great flutter of white wings!

"Ghosts!" shrieked the terrified Sandy. "I told you that cat would bring me bad luck. We've run into ghosts!"

He didn't stop to think that, if there were such a thing as a ghost and if it brought bad luck, Sunny Boy was just as apt to get the bad luck as he was. No, there was room in Sandy's mind for just one person, and that was himself.

"Take them away!" he shouted. "Take them away, Sunny Boy."

The "ghosts" were flying in through the low doorway and perching on the top of the open

door itself. They were, some of them, sitting on the roof of the boathouse. Sunny Boy was laughing, even while he was aware that more water had come into the house and that it had begun to tilt a little.

"Don't be an idiot, Sandy!" he said cheerfully. "There aren't any ghosts. Besides, they wouldn't look like chickens, would they? We must have bumped into a chicken house. There are chickens all over the place!"

Sandy began to grumble that he wasn't an owl and how could he be supposed to see chickens in the dark? But he must have felt better, because he stopped talking about ghosts and crawled over to the door and peered out.

"Wish these pesky hens wouldn't run all over me," he grumbled, for the poor frightened chickens, not finding any roost in the boathouse, were slipping and falling all about, flapping their wings uneasily as they tried to find a place to rest.

"I think I see a light," said Sunny Boy slowly.

He watched intently. Yes, there it was again!

"Over that way!" he exclaimed, pointing.

"It *is* a house!" cried Sandy, in great excitement. "Either that, or a barn. There's a bunch of trees, too. I'll bet I can get hold of one of them."

He stepped over Sunny Boy and the next moment the floating boathouse had run in close beside a group of trees. Sunny Boy knew they must be willow trees, for the river banks were lined with them.

"Grab hold!" shouted Sandy, and he shot into the air.

There was a ripping sound, but the branch held. Sunny Boy heard Sandy puff and pant as the big boy drew himself up. Then, before Sunny Boy could even attempt to jump for the overhanging branches, the boathouse was swept out into the current again and Sunny Boy, the chicken "ghosts" and the black cat went on down the stream.

CHAPTER XIV

MR. JIM WATCHER

SUNNY BOY was very tired by this time. Tired and sleepy. Sandy MacFall, disagreeable as he was, had been better company than none. Now that he was gone, Sunny Boy felt lonelier than ever.

"I suppose it will be morning by and by," he thought hopefully.

He wondered what time it was. He rather thought he had been floating all night on the stream, but he couldn't be sure. And though he looked out of the door, he saw no signs of sunrise.

The rain had stopped. That was something for which to be thankful. Sunny Boy hoped, if he was going to sea in a boathouse, that it would be morning before they reached the sea. Then,

at least, he would have a chance of being picked up before he was swept out into the great ocean.

"But I hope I don't go as far as the ocean," Sunny Boy told himself. "What would I do for something to eat? And how would I ever get back? No, I hope I stay in a river, or maybe a lake—some place where the houses aren't far off. Then I could raise some kind of a signal of distress and they'd see me and bring me in. Oh, dear! what a terribly long night it is," and he sighed a sigh that came from the very bottom of his heart.

The cat was quiet and even the chickens seemed to have settled down. Sunny Boy looked at the fowls thoughtfully.

He was so sleepy that he thought he would have to lie down on the wet floor, puddles and all. In an effort to find a half dry place, he began to crawl over the floor, dragging the quilt with him. In one corner he stumbled against something that felt smooth and cold.

A long ray of light fell through the doorway,

and, turning, Sunny Boy saw the moon—a round, smiling moon that looked extremely friendly. Sunny Boy had never been so glad to see the moon before.

He took his find over to the doorway and the moonlight showed him that he had found a boat-hook, the long curved steel that is used to hold a boat fast to a dock or to another boat until the rope can be made fast.

"Gee, if I could hook this into a tree, I'd be all right," thought Sunny Boy, forgetting to be sleepy and feeling excited instead.

The moonlight made everything seem more hopeful. For one thing, Sunny Boy could see now. He looked down the river and there was a clump of willow trees.

"If I can catch the hook in one of those!" he exclaimed aloud to himself. "I must be ready and drive it in deep."

He looked a very small boy, alone there in the moonlight with a host of fluttering white chickens around him and a black cat sitting plac-

idly at his feet; a very small boy to be afloat on a wide and angry river with no better boat than a leaky old building and no one to help him or advise him what to do.

However, Sunny Boy wasn't feeling sorry for himself nor afraid. His whole mind was intent on getting that boathook into one of the trees. As the boathouse rocked downstream, Sunny Boy stood ready, and when he was opposite a tree, he plunged his hook into the bark.

It held—no it didn't—yes it did! For one moment he thought the weight of the boathouse would tear it loose and that he would go floating on downstream. But the boathook held, and swung back and forth gently.

The moonlight showed Sunny Boy a little harbor among the willows where, in low water, there was probably land. But the flood had crept in between the trees and there was an enclosure there now, just about large enough to hold the boathouse safely, if it could be eased in among the trees.

Sunny Boy thought for a moment, and then threw his weight, slowly and carefully, toward the end of the building that was nearest this little harbor. To his delight, the boathouse began to swing round. Gently, very gently, it swung. Slowly, oh, very slowly, the current began to sweep it in among the trees. Sunny Boy scarcely dared breathe.

At last, there he was, safely hemmed in by willow trees and he knew that he could probably make his way to shore. He might get a little wet, but then he was already wet. He didn't know how deep the water was and that was a disadvantage, because if he climbed out on a branch and lost his hold and tumbled into very deep water, he might easily drown.

"Hello! Hello there! I say, is there anybody in that old boathouse?" bellowed a loud and cheerful voice unexpectedly.

Sunny Boy's own cheerful voice—sounding pretty thin and weak in that waste of willow trees and water—rang out in instant response.

"Oh, please come and take me ashore! Please would you mind taking me ashore?"

"Christopher Columbus and Julius Caesar, it's a kid!" the loud voice commented in evident amazement. "Hey, you, whoever you are, hold fast till I get there. Don't move a fingernail until I give you leave."

"I won't!" promised Sunny Boy, so delighted at the prospect of being rescued that he squeezed the black cat until he nearly choked her and she escaped from him with an indignant bound as soon as he released her.

In the moonlight which streamed through the branches, the water seemed to dance and glimmer. Sunny Boy saw a rowboat coming, and in less than five minutes it had reached him.

"Well, if it isn't Robinson Crusoe himself with his chickens and his cat and all!" exclaimed the man who was rowing the boat.

Sunny Boy beamed upon him. He liked him very much. He was a large man with a thin brown face and eyes that twinkled and he looked

as though he found it fun to go about rescuing people.

"These aren't my chickens," explained Sunny Boy carefully. "They bumped into me. And this isn't really my cat; she climbed off a tree and jumped in my face."

"Well, is it your boathouse then?" asked the tall man, holding fast to the building with one strong, powerful brown hand.

"No-o, it isn't," Sunny Boy answered. "It belongs to Mr. Cranberry."

"Then you can't have any scruples about deserting it," said the tall man. "Would you be so good as to come with me, Robinson Crusoe? I dare say your father is worried stiff about you."

"He isn't at home," Sunny Boy replied. "But I guess my mother will be worried stiff. Do you think you'll have time to rescue Sandy MacFall, too?"

"Your mother?" said the tall man, scooping up Sunny Boy with one hand and depositing him in the boat. "Why, your mother will be wild!

How long is it since you've left your desert island?"

But Sunny Boy wasn't minded to leave the boathouse without more rescues.

"There's the cat," he urged, "and the chickens. Don't let them drown."

"The boathouse is safe enough where it is," said the man. "In fact, I think by morning the water will have fallen several feet. The chickens are well enough off, too. Let them rest. They'll probably stay where they are until we can come and get them. Call the cat—we'll take her for good luck if she will come."

Sunny Boy remembered that Sandy had thought the cat would bring him bad luck, and this tall man with the cheerful face thought she would bring him good luck. He looked as though "good" luck followed him wherever he went, thought Sunny Boy.

"Here, kitty, kitty!" he called, and the black cat came running and leaped lightly into the waiting boat.

"She wants some milk and a warm stove to sleep under," laughed the man. "Well, son, we must set your mother's mind at rest. Where does your father, Mr. Cranberry, live?"

"Oh, he isn't my father!" said Sunny Boy, watching while the boat was sent under the willows with strong, steady strokes of the oars. "Mr. Cranberry owns the farm where we are boarding. Mr. Horton is my daddy. I'm Sunny Boy Horton."

The man's eyes twinkled at him.

"No wonder you're still smiling, with a name like that," he declared. "I am Jim Watcher. And now I'm glad, for the first time in four months, that I had a telephone put in my bungalow. If I can reach your mother by telephone, you can spend what is left of the night with me and I'll take you home in the morning."

Sunny Boy tried to hide a big yawn and failed.

"Isn't it to-morrow yet?" he asked sleepily.

"You poor kid, you've been through a siege, haven't you?" said his new friend sympatheti-

cally. "It's half past one, Sunny Boy. I came out to enjoy the glorious moonlight, or I might not have seen your shack till daylight."

The boat nosed into the soft mud of the bank and Jim Watcher lifted out Sunny Boy, who clung to the black cat. He was so sleepy that though he tried to walk, he continually stumbled. So Jim Watcher finally picked him up in his arms and carried him to a little green bungalow built in a grove of willow trees.

He put him down on a sofa and went to the telephone. By the time Jim had Willow Farm on the wire Sunny Boy was fast asleep, but he was gently shaken awake to speak to his mother. Poor Mrs. Horton could not believe that Sunny Boy was really safe till she heard his voice. No one at Willow Farm, except the children, had gone to bed, and a telegram had been sent Mr. Horton, who was hurrying home.

"Go to sleep darling, and Mother will be waiting for you in the morning," said Mrs. Horton. Then she thanked Jim until he declared that she

must not say another word, but must go to bed and rest, herself.

Sunny Boy was too sleepy to know where he was after that and when he woke the next morning, the little room where he lay in bed was flooded with sunshine. Jim Watcher stood in the doorway, smiling at him.

"Good morning, Robinson Crusoe," he said gayly. "Do you feel as though you could eat a few scrambled eggs this bright day?"

Sunny Boy suddenly realized that he was hungry! He hopped out of bed and dressed quickly and went out to find Jim Watcher cooking eggs and the black cat watching him solemnly. All the rooms in the house were on one floor and there were only four of them. A big studio, where Jim—Sunny Boy was calling him Jim within five minutes and he learned later that every one used his first name—painted and drew pictures, and two bedrooms and a room that was a combination of kitchen and dining room. There was a gorgeous big bathroom, too, and,

outside, a stable in which a beautiful bay horse ate his breakfast and looked longingly toward the house in the hope of seeing his master.

"I have to get you home right away, Robinson," said Jim, giving Sunny Boy a second helping of egg. "I promised your mother we wouldn't dillydally. But I'll come over and borrow you often this summer. You and I can have a grand time keeping house together."

Sunny Boy beamed delightedly at this prospect. In fact, he liked every suggestion Jim Watcher made. When he suggested that the black cat stay there at the bungalow and that Sunny Boy could come and visit her as often as he liked, that pleased Sunny Boy; for they had several cats at the farm and might not like another. Jim had no cat and he said this one would be sure to bring him luck. So the cat stayed and every time Sunny Boy saw her she was fatter and shinier and looked more contented.

Then Jim saddled the big bay horse and brought him around and lifted Sunny Boy up

to sit on the saddle before him and they rode away, through the willow trees, to the state highway. Then the bay horse was allowed to gallop and the breeze whistled through Sunny Boy's hair and sang in his ears and he thought he had never had such a good time in all his life.

Dear me, when they reached Willow Farm, how glad every one was to see him! His mother cried—just a little—and his daddy (who had ridden all night and had not slept at all, for he had arrived just in time for breakfast) patted him on the back which was his way of saying, "I love you." All the mothers cried a little bit, and Irma and the boys asked him many questions.

"I wish I'd been with you," said Irma. "I think it must be fun to sail down the river in a boathouse and stay up all night and be rescued and then come home on a horse. You have all the fun, Sunny Boy!"

But Jim Watcher laughed and said he didn't think it was much fun to be all alone in a leaky house on a flood tide and to have chickens and

cats fly in your face and not to know for sure whether you were ever going to be rescued.

"Oh-h!" cried Sunny Boy, suddenly remembering that Jim had never answered his question about Sandy MacFall. "Oh, Jim, I asked if you'd have time to rescue Sandy MacFall and you didn't say yes or no. Maybe he is drowned."

"I hope he is right where I left him," Jim said grimly. "That is half way out on a willow branch. If I had my way he'd stay there till he learned a few things he needs to know!"

Sunny Boy stared. When had Jim seen Sandy MacFall?

CHAPTER XV

HOME AGAIN

"SANDY MacFALL!" echoed Sunny Boy's mother, in astonishment. "Why, Sunny Boy, did you see Sandy MacFall while you were in the boathouse?"

Sunny Boy explained how the red-headed lad had tumbled into the boathouse, shrieking that he was going to drown.

"Guess he must have been fooling around in Sam Lane's tool house," commented Mr. Cranberry, when he heard this. "Sam said this morning the flood had carried it away, but he'd taken out most of the tools the day before. Sandy MacFall was there this morning—I saw him weeding the garden when I went to borrow an axe."

"Then he got home. Like a bad penny I sup-

pose he always turns up," said Jim Watcher. "After Sunny Boy was asleep properly in bed last night, I started out to rescue this friend of his. At least I thought he must be a friend of his, for Sunny Boy asked me particularly if I'd have time to recue him. I didn't know where to find him, but I thought I'd ride upstream, knowing he must be somewhere along the course the boathouse had followed.

"I went perhaps a mile up the bank, and twice I nearly lamed my horse in the soft mud. Then I heard some one bellowing. I followed the voice and came to a big overgrown boy clinging for dear life to a tree branch—and his legs were so long he could almost have touched the ground from where he sat!"

They all laughed a little at the picture of Sandy MacFall, clinging to a willow tree branch and his long legs dangling a few inches above the ground.

"Well, I rode up to him," continued Jim Watcher, "and asked him what he was doing

there and if he didn't want to come down and go home with me and finish the rest of the night. He began to cry and whimpered that he couldn't get down and he was afraid he'd fall. I started to ride close to him, planning to yank him off that tree, for I thought perhaps he was really frightened and had lost his common sense. But before I could get to him he began to whine and complain that he had been perfectly comfortable in an old boathouse until Sunny Boy Horton had pushed him off and left him clinging to this tree and likely at any moment to drop back into the water."

"Why, I never did!" gasped Sunny Boy. "I never pushed him off! He stepped right over me and grabbed the willow branch."

"That sounds more like the truth," Jim Watcher said dryly. "I nearly laughed when he complained that you had pushed him off—he'd make two of you, any day. I got so exasperated, hearing that big kid carry on in that silly hysterical fashion, that I finally went away and left

him. If Mr. Cranberry saw him this morning, he must have rescued himself."

Jim Watcher stayed to dinner at Willow Farm, for the excellent reason that no one would let him go, and Mrs. Cranberry made raspberry ice cream in honor of the special guest. The children took him all over the place and he gave each one a ride in his saddle. He told them the name of his horse—it was Carlos—and he thought Jojo was a fine donkey and offered to paint his portrait some day.

"But the model I really want," he said, when they were seated at the dinner table, "is Sunny Boy, holding the black cat. If I could borrow him for a week or two—"

"Oh, I couldn't spare him!" declared Mrs. Horton quickly. "I wouldn't know what to do without him!"

"He'd be perfectly safe at my place," Jim Watcher said persuasively. "I'd see that he didn't go within ten feet of the river, whether the water was high or low, and I'd send him to bed

at the regular hour, and we could paint and talk and play with the black cat."

He had his way in the end, of course—few people could resist Jim when he asked them favors. And when Sunny Boy's mother had ridden over to the bungalow and had seen the big studio and played with the green-eyed black cat herself and walked in the garden, she was almost as enthusiastic about it as Sunny Boy himself. He didn't spend all the rest of his time in the country with Jim, but whenever the artist rode over on Carlos, which was once or twice a week, he "borrowed" Sunny Boy for a day or two and took him back, riding on the saddle before him. The picture was an excellent likeness—every one agreed to that. It showed Sunny Boy, seated on the stone doorstep of the bungalow, holding the black cat in his arms. The following winter this picture was shown in one of the galleries in a large city and hundreds of people saw the boy and the cat and wondered if they had been painted from a real boy and a real cat.

But when Sunny Boy wasn't sitting still to be painted, he was having a very good time indeed with the other children on the farm. The river went down as rapidly as it had risen, and in less than two days it was a placid stream again. The chickens that had flocked to the old boathouse were rescued by their owner and seemed none the worse for their experience. The old boathouse was never hauled back to the farm, for Mr. Cranberry said it wasn't worth the labor. So Jim Watcher chopped it up for firewood and he and Sunny Boy and the black cat saw it make a merry blaze in the great stone fireplace in the studio.

"Just to think—I thought I might sail right down to the ocean in that old boathouse," said Sunny Boy, as he stood and watched the blaze leaping up the chimney.

"Might have been quite an adventure," returned Jim. "Might have been swept clear out to some lonely island where the cannibals lived, and they might have eaten you."

"Not me—I'm too tough. They'd break their teeth on me." Sunny Boy had heard Bill say that. The joke made Jim laugh heartily.

Sunny Boy did not see Sandy MacFall for a week or two after his adventure. Then, one day, Ed offered to take him with him to the mill. You might not have thought that the ride to the mill was a pleasant one, for the bags of corn were piled high on the wagon and the wagon had no springs and jolted fearfully. But Sunny Boy liked to sit up on the little narrow high seat with Ed and he never minded how slowly the two fat farm horses plodded along. He and Ed could talk about farming and baseball and policemen and New York. Ed had a sister who lived in New York City and Sunny Boy had been lost there once, so they both knew what a large place it was and they liked to talk it over.

When they reached the mill, Sunny Boy climbed down from the wagon and went inside, for he never tired of watching the big stones which crushed the corn into meal which Ed

carried back to the farm to feed the cows. Leaning against an empty barrel inside the mill was Sandy MacFall!

"Hello!" said Sunny Boy. "You didn't get drowned, did you?"

"No-o," Sandy answered. "I'm all right. Are you all right?"

His face had turned very red and he shuffled his feet in embarrassment.

"Huh, a fine brave lad you are, Sandy MacFall!" remarked Ed, in evident disgust, brushing past him to speak to the miller. "A great help you are, when there's any danger or discomfort to be met."

Sandy's neck and ears turned as red as his face.

"I have to be going," he murmured, and actually ran for the big double doors.

The miller and Ed laughed and Sandy must have heard them. But Sunny Boy couldn't help feeling a little sorry for the big boy. He didn't like to be laughed at, and even if Sandy was a

coward, it was too bad that every one should laugh at him.

He told Ben and Fred about him when he got back to the farm, but they didn't have much sympathy for Sandy. They remembered how he had driven into the stand and knocked it over and Irma declared she had never liked him. Even the first time she saw him, when he was fishing the brook, she disliked him.

The children could play in the brook now without fear of meeting Sandy. Mr. Lane had discovered how lazy he was and kept him busy near the house where he could see when he worked and when he didn't. Sandy had no chance to go fishing and Willow Brook was left to the youngsters on Willow Farm. They mended David's water wheel, and one day Mr. Horton came down and helped them build a little dam, over which the water trickled with a noise that you could hear when several yards from the stream.

"It would be fun if we had a boat wreck," said Sunny Boy critically the day after the dam was

built. "We ought to have a boathouse—or something—and let it go over the dam and be dashed to pieces on the rocks below."

"Oh, Precious, don't talk about wrecks," his mother pleaded. "Suppose your boathouse had gone over a dam that night with you in it!"

"But it didn't and there wasn't any dam," said Sunny Boy, and his regret at missing such an exciting experience was so plain that every one at the breakfast table laughed.

"This is only fun, Mrs. Horton," Fred assured her. "We can take an empty box and let it dash, only we'll have to fix some rocks for it to fall on."

As soon as breakfast was over, the children hurried down to the brook. They had a wooden box, which was to be the boathouse, and Irma had a celluloid doll which she always used for water experiments. Nothing could drown the doll and her paint didn't come off, and altogether she was a most satisfactory possession.

"We ought to have something for Sandy Mac-

Fall," said David, as he watched Fred cut an opening in the box for the door.

Fred was the only one who was allowed to have a knife. So, as he couldn't whittle, Ben began to pile stones below the little dam for the box to crash down on, and Sunny Boy helped him. They took off their shoes and stockings and stood knee deep in water.

"I know," giggled Irma. "You wait and I'll get it. Promise me, cross your hearts, you won't let the box sail over the dam until I come back with what I'm going to get!"

The boys looked at her patiently. Irma was always excited about something. But if she was willing to go all the way back to the house for something to represent Sandy MacFall, she must have a good "pretend" in mind.

"We'll wait for you," promised Sunny Boy, shaking the hair out of his eyes.

"Only don't be forever," Fred protested prudently.

Irma set off on a run. She must have run all

the way to the garden back of the farmhouse and then all the way to the brook again, for her face was scarlet when she returned. She was so out of breath and so dripping with perspiration that the boys forebore to question her, though they were curious to know what she had gone after.

"Is the boathouse ready?" gasped Irma, as soon as she could speak. "Then here's something we can make believe is Sandy MacFall!"

She opened her hand and there was a half rotten tomato! Irma, you see, remembered what Sunny Boy had told her of his first meeting with the disagreeable boy.

"That's fine!" snickered Fred. "Put it in the boathouse, Irma. We're going to start the box 'way upstream. Come on, everybody. Bring sticks, because if it gets stuck we'll have to shove it."

Sunny Boy and David went on one side of the brook, and Irma, Fred and Ben on the other, so that if the box—excuse us, the boathouse—lodged in any of the bushes or weeds that grew

along the edge of the water, they could push it out into the center of the stream.

"But you mustn't push it when it's sailing along," said Sunny Boy earnestly, "because we want it to act the way the boathouse really did, bob up and down, you know."

They put the celluloid doll and the half rotten tomato in the box and then Fred put it gently in the water and pushed it, with his stick, out into the center of the brook. It rocked about slowly for a few moments, then the current caught it and it began to move down the brook.

"We'll have to ruffle the water to make it bob up and down," decided Sunny Boy, after watching the boathouse sail smoothly for a time.

The five sticks "ruffled" the water carefully, and the "boathouse" began to bob up and down like a particularly active and fidgety cork.

"Now we're coming to the dam!" shouted Sunny Boy, as he always shouted when he was excited. "Hey, Fred, look out for the weeds on your side."

Fred put out his stick, meaning only to fend the box away from a tangle of weeds which were growing near an old tree root.

Instead, he caught the box and flung it forward. It trembled a moment on the brink of the dam, then slipped over the edge and disappeared in a spray of water.

"She's wrecked!" shrieked Sunny Boy, running forward. "I'll bet she's a complete and total loss!"

The others all ran, and it was a wonder they did not go over the dam, too, and make total and complete wrecks of themselves, by all falling into the water together. However, they managed to stop on the bank, though Sunny Boy did fall half way in, that is, one of his legs went in and the other stayed on dry land. A little thing like that wouldn't bother him, though, and as he lifted the splinters of the box, his face was beaming.

"It's a grand smash!" he announced. "Those rocks were fixed just right! The doll isn't hurt

a bit, but Sandy MacFall is drowned all right!"

At that moment Irma pulled his sleeve and he looked up. There stood Jim Watcher with Sandy MacFall behind him!

"Who's drowned?" asked Jim, smiling pleasantly at them all.

"Sandy MacFall," Fred replied, for Sunny Boy seemed to have lost his tongue.

"How can he be?" retorted Jim. "I've got him with me. He's going to split wood this afternoon for me, because he thought it was funny to hide behind a hedge and shy stones at Carlos as I went past the Lane farm yesterday."

Sandy scowled fearfully, but he said nothing at all.

"What do you really mean when you say Sandy MacFall is drowned?" Jim persisted, looking at Sunny Boy.

"Well," said Sunny Boy reluctantly, "we were only playing. We made a boathouse out of a box and sent it over the dam to see what would happen. Irma's doll was in it and it wasn't hurt

a bit. Here it is," and he held up the doll for Jim to see.

"And here's Sandy MacFall!" cried Fred, scooping up something from the water. "He's drowned all right! He was a rotten tomato!"

Jim Watcher looked at the crestfallen Sandy and laughed. He said that he had heard that story, too, and perhaps Sandy would try to do better before he lost the liking of every one he ever met. Then Jim went away, taking Sandy with him, and Sunny Boy and his friends went back to their play.

There were other good times on Willow Farm for Sunny Boy, but we will say good-by to him now.

THE END

This Isn't All!

Would you like to know what became of the good friends you have made in this book?

Would you like to read other stories continuing their adventures and experiences, or other books quite as entertaining by the same author?

On the *reverse side* of the wrapper which comes with this book, you will find a wonderful list of stories which you can buy at the same store where you got this book.

Don't throw away the Wrapper

Use it as a handy catalog of the books you want some day to have. But in case you do mislay it, write to the Publishers for a complete catalog.

THE BOBBSEY TWINS BOOKS

For Little Men and Women

By LAURA LEE HOPE

Author of "The Bunny Brown Series," Etc.

Illustrated. Every Volume Complete in Itself.

These books for boys and girls between the ages of three and ten stand among children and their parents of this generation where the books of Louisa May Alcott stood in former days. The haps and mishaps of this inimitable pair of twins, their many adventures and experiences are a source of keen delight to imaginative children.

THE BOBBSEY TWINS
THE BOBBSEY TWINS IN THE COUNTRY
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT THE SEASHORE
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT SCHOOL
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT SNOW LODGE
THE BOBBSEY TWINS ON A HOUSEBOAT
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT MEADOWBROOK
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT HOME
THE BOBBSEY TWINS IN A GREAT CITY
THE BOBBSEY TWINS ON BLUEBERRY ISLAND
THE BOBBSEY TWINS ON THE DEEP BLUE SEA
THE BOBBSEY TWINS IN THE GREAT WEST
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT CEDAR CAMP
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT THE COUNTY FAIR
THE BOBBSEY TWINS CAMPING OUT
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AND BABY MAY
THE BOBBSEY TWINS KEEPING HOUSE
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT CLOVERBANK
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT CHERRY CORNERS
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AND THEIR SCHOOLMATES
THE BOBBSEY TWINS TREASURE HUNTING
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT SPRUCE LAKE
THE BOBBSEY TWINS' WONDERFUL SECRET
THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT THE CIRCUS

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK